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ABSTRACT

This manual provides suggestions and materials for teaching about Japan. Designed as a supplement to typical textbook treatments, the lessons provide a range of readings, visuals, and activities to enrich and deepen student learning about Japan. Organized around topics dealing with history, geography, government, economics, and culture, the lessons provide teachers with flexibility of selecting and adapting lessons for specific classroom settings. Each lesson begins with an outline for teaching which includes instructional objectives, a list of needed materials, and a sequenced list of procedures for implementing the lessons. This packet of materials contains most of the materials needed for implementation. The manual is divided into six topics with a lesson plan under each topic. Topics include: (1) "Japanese Art Forms: Poetry and Art"; (2) "Japanese Art Forms: Folktales and Music"; (3) "Family Life in Japan: Changing Times"; (4) "Japanese Schools: Is Change Needed?"; (5) "The Japanese at Work"; and (6) "The Japanese Standard of Living." (EH)

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IMAJ

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS ABOUT JAPAN

JAPANESE CULTURE: TRADITION AND CHANGE

For Students In Grades Nine through Twelve

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IMAJ

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS ABOUT JAPAN

JAPANESE CULTURE: TRADITION AND CHANGE

For Students In Grades Nine through Twelve

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Introduction

Japan has drawn increasing attention from the media and schools in the United States in recent years. The Japanese continue to fascinate and perplex Americans. An understanding of the Japanese and their culture among United States citizens, however, is still inadequate. Although various elements of Japanese society may appear familiar because of the Japanese penchant for creative adaptation, the familiar usually has a distinctive Japanese twist to it. Other elements of the Japanese culture are, of course, quite different from our own experience or that of other Westerners. Yet despite differences in historic traditions and cultures, we and the Japanese confront many of the same issues of industrial and postindustrial urban society. For these reasons the study of Japan can be both interesting and rewarding.

This document provides suggestions and materials for teaching about Japan. Designed as a supplement to typical textbook treatments, it provides a range of readings, visuals, and activities to enrich and deepen student learning about Japan. Organized around topics dealing with history, geography, government, economics, and culture, the lessons provide teachers with the flexibility of selecting and adapting lessons for specific classroom settings.

Each lesson begins with an outline for teaching which includes instructional objectives, a list of needed materials, and a sequenced list of procedures for implementing the lessons. This package of materials provides the teacher with most of the materials needed for implementation.

These materials may be reproduced by teachers and school systems for classroom use.

Foreword

THE JAPAN AMERICA SOCIETY OF GEORGIA

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As we enter the 21st century, globalization becomes more prominent in every Georgian's life. One of the most important areas of this growing awareness involves the bilateral relationship between the United States and Japan.

The continuing emergence of Asian countries necessitates an even greater understanding of Japan's role as a leader in the Pacific Rim, in addition to its role in global politics. Add to this the need for cultural, educational and business awareness of Japan and you can understand the role The Japan-America Society of Georgia plays in providing curriculum resource materials to Georgia educators.

The Japan-America Society of Georgia strives to effectively respond to the forces shaping our global environment by improving on Japanese-related educational curricula. These lessons have been developed in conjunction with the Georgia Department of Education and correlate with objectives of the Quality Core Curriculum.

With over 350 Japanese establishments located throughout the state, virtually every community is touched by this global impact. Therefore, it is imperative Georgia students of all ages be given the opportunity to expand their knowledge of other countries so they are better able to deal with an increasingly complex and competitive world.

Daniel P. Amos
Chairman

JAPANESE CULTURE: TRADITION AND CHANGE

The rapid and sustained changes taking place in Japanese society and life are recognized by many observers and the Japanese themselves. A Japanese government publication aptly summarized the scope and impact of these changes and the Japanese ability to blend tradition and change:

> Japan has been called the world's most rapidly changing society. At the same time, Japan rests upon traditions reaching back into the mists of time. History and tradition, far from imposing barriers to change, have actually stimulated change in Japan in a manner perhaps unknown in other nations of the world.
>
> Throughout their long history, the Japanese people have shown a unique aptitude for assimilating and adapting new ideas to their particular cultural milieu. The aptitude stems from the history and geography of Japan, which have created an unusually homogeneous people. Over the centuries, they developed institutions, customs, and characteristics that have given them a strong sense of national identity and common purpose.
>
> The strength and stability derived from these features of the national life helped Japan undergo two major transformations in the last one hundred years, first in the late 19th century when it threw off a stagnant feudal system to embark upon the road to modernization and again in the mid-20th century when it turned away from the tragic experience of World War II to create a new society dedicated to peaceful cooperation and the democratic way of life. While these two periods brought almost revolutionary change in both the political and social structure, this was accomplished without discarding traditional roots or impairing social continuity.
>
> One measure of this transformation is the high level of economic growth attained during the last quarter of a century, in which Japan has made itself into one of the world's leading industrial nations. In terms of a longer passage of time, Japan has transformed itself from an agricultural society content with minimum standards of living a mere one hundred years ago into an advanced industrial society with a national lifestyle based on higher standards of material, cultural, and intellectual achievement.
>
> A second measure of this change can be found in the gradual internationalization of almost all aspects of the national life. Long limited in their contact with the outside world, first by the accident of island geography, then by self-imposed isolation for two and a half centuries, and finally in the present century by war and occupation, the Japanese are now seeing their proper role within the framework of international cooperation. Japan today belongs to all major world forums, actively pursues a diplomacy for peace, and is contributing to greater mutual understanding as an active member of the community of nations.

From *Japan of Today* (Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1993), p. 5.

TOPIC 1

JAPANESE ART FORMS: POETRY AND ART

Lesson

How do Japanese literature and art reflect the Japanese culture?

LESSON OBJECTIVES

The student will 1) give examples of how Japanese art forms are a reflection of the culture; 2) describe the influences of Shinto and Buddhism on Japanese thought and art; 3) describe *origami* and its function in Japanese life; and 4) discuss *haiku* poetry as a reflection of the Japanese world view.

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

❑ Handout 1.1 "Literature, Buddhism and Shinto"
❑ Handout 1.2 "Haiku"
❑ Handout 1.3 "Origami"
❑ Origami paper or plain sheets of paper

STRATEGIES

Literature and artistic creations reflect a people's culture and values. The Japanese have centuries-old traditions in many field of artistic endeavor. These traditions continue today not only in traditional fields but in many areas of contemporary life--in home decorations, store displays, gift wrapping, and in displaying and serving food, for example. This lesson focuses on *haiku* poetry and *origami*, the art of paper folding, to illustrate the Japanese aesthetic tradition.

Have students name some American literary works, films or television shows that reflect our way of life. Ask students to identify the values reflected in these works. Next, distribute copies of Handout 1.1, "Literature, Buddhism and Shinto," and have students read the selection and discuss it by asking such questions as the following:

- How did Japanese religions/philosophy influence art and literature?
- How do Japanese art forms reflect and influence culture? Is this similar or different from influences on our culture?

Distribute copies of Handout 1.2, "Haiku." Allow time for students to read and reflect on the poems. Ask for volunteer to read the poems orally and ask students to share their impressions. Ask:

- What do you notice about the form?
- What are some recurring elements in these poems?
- What themes of Japanese life do they illustrate?

Distribute copies of Handout 1.3, "Origami," and paper for folding, and have students make at least one *origami* figure while you demonstrate. After they have completed their figures, ask:

- What does this tell us about the care, skill and planning that goes into this art form?
- Do we have any similar art forms in our culture? Do other societies with which you are familiar?

To conclude this lesson, select one of the recommended films on the resource list in the back of this booklet that will appeal to your students and your overall course objectives. Have students note the values and artistic qualities presented.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- ► The whale figure might inspire some students, already interested in conservation or free enterprise to do research on the Japanese position on conservation of whales and the Japanese interests in the whaling industry.

- ► Have students create additional *origami* figures using Handout 1.3, "Origami" or a reference available in the school or community library.

- ► Have students try writing *haiku* poetry themselves.

LITERATURE, BUDDHISM AND SHINTO

As a reflection of culture, literature can teach us much about the way foreign people view their world. The foundation of the Japanese world view can be found in Shinto and Buddhism, the major traditional religions of Japan. Reverence for nature is a prevalent theme in *haiku* and many other Japanese art forms. The origin for the Japanese view of the struggle for human beings and nature to be as one is reflected in the two religions, Buddhism and Shinto.

Shinto, the indigenous religion of Japan, which dates back to at least 8,000 B.C., teaches that the divine is found in all aspects of nature.

Buddhism diffused to Japan in the sixth century from India by way of China and Korea. Buddhism stresses a philosophy of life on earth as a search for enlightenment or wisdom.

Haiku is a poetic form developed by the seventeenth century A.D. which remains popular in contemporary Japan. This is one of many examples of the preservation of tradition in modern industrialized Japan. In *haiku,* the shortest poem has three alternating lines of five or seven syllables totaling seventeen (5, 7, 5).

Because of the strict rules followed in writing *haiku,* a poet, often a layman, strives for simplicity and precision through discipline, patience and practice--values which have their origins in Shinto and Buddhism.

HAIKU

Haiku is a short poem with three alternating lines of five or seven syllables totaling seventeen syllables (5, 7, 5). Haiku poems are a reflection of Japanese thought. Each of the following is a separate poem.

Is it showering?
A muddy cat is asleep
on a Buddhist sutra.
--*Natsume Soseki*

Against the autumn sky
A nameless mountain towers
higher than ever.
--*Natsume Soseki*

Green onions flowering--
for a moment golden
Buddha was there.
--*Kawabata Bosha*

A spider web
hanging before my eyes, evening
mountains and rivers.
--*Kawabata Bosha*

In the moonlight
how clearly the deep snow
shows its scars!
--*Kawabata Bosha*

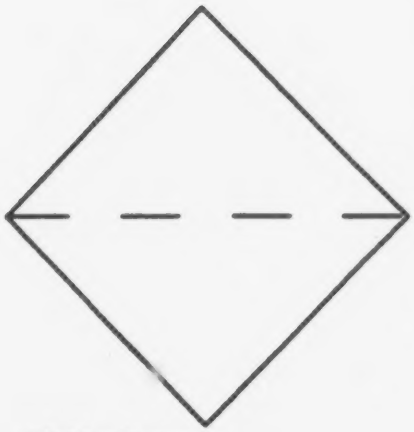
In the faint light of dawn
a tree blossoming in white,
the field sprinkled with dew.
--*Kawahigashi Hekigodo*

A sleeping cow?
A boulder? It could be either
Grass sprouts out.
--*Kawahigashi Hekigodo*

From *Modern Japanese Haiku: An Anthology*, compiled and translated by Makoto Ueda (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press).

ORIGAMI

Duck



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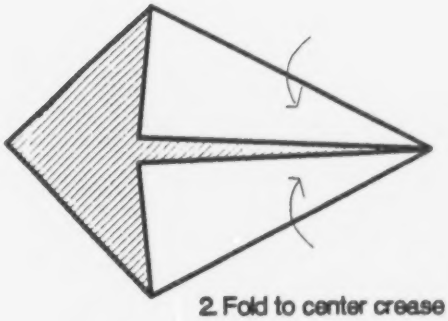

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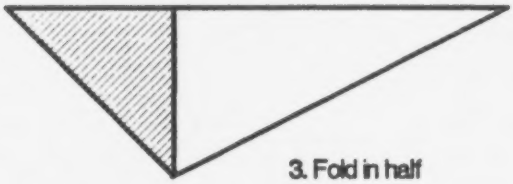

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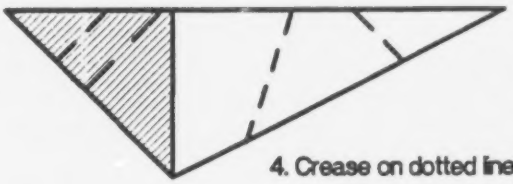
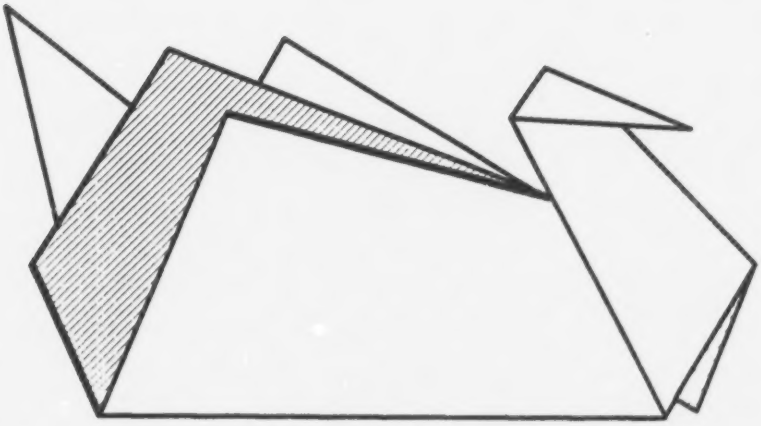
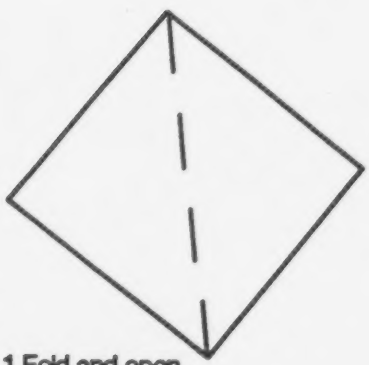


4. Crease on dotted lines

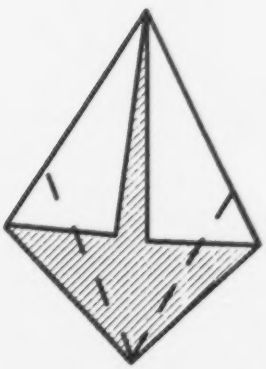


5. Fold inward on dotted lines

ORIGAMI
Quail



1. Fold and open

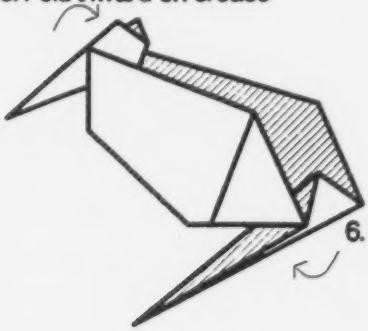


2. Fold to center crease

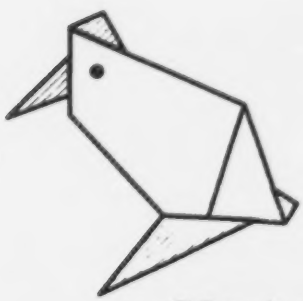
3. Fold to center crease

4. Fold in half
Crease on dotted lines

5. Fold inward on crease

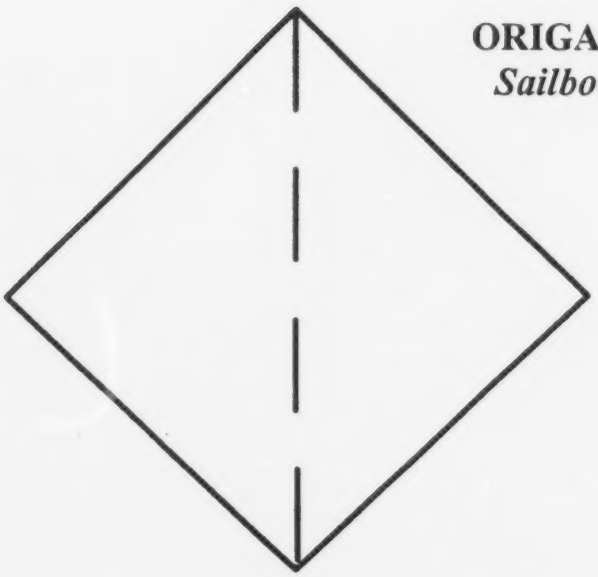


6. Fold inward on creases



7. Draw in eyes

ORIGAMI
Sailboat



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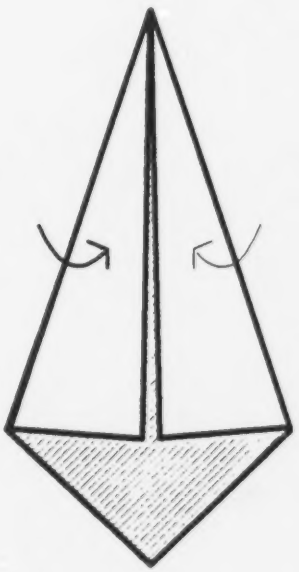

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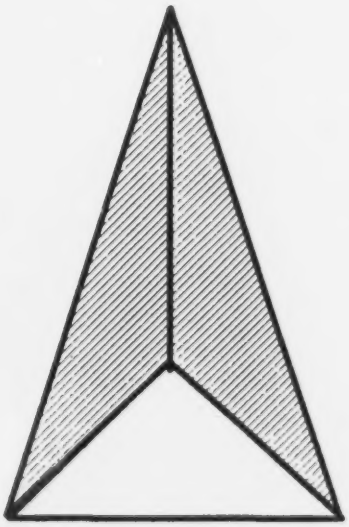
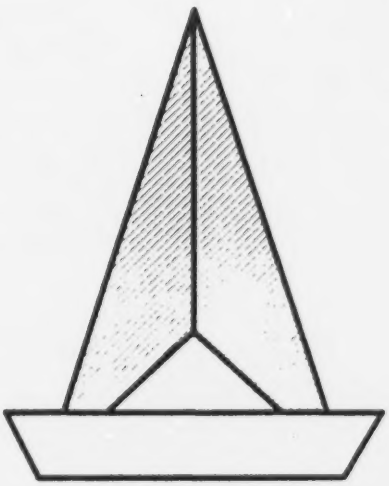
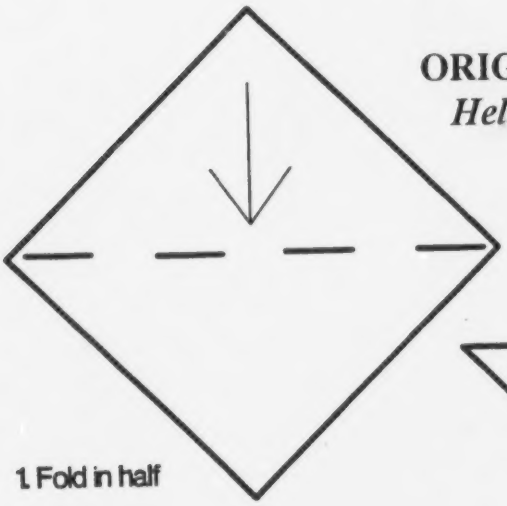


3. Fold up from bottom



4. Fold up again

ORIGAMI
Helmet



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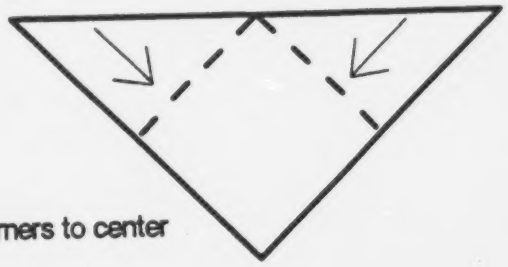

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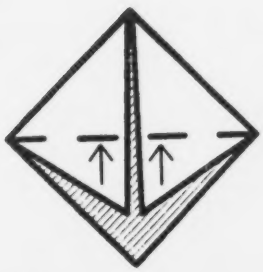

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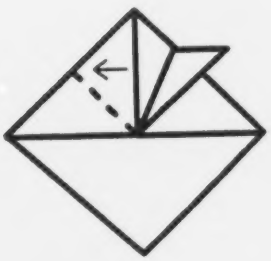

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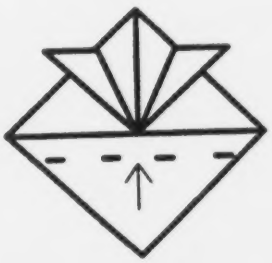

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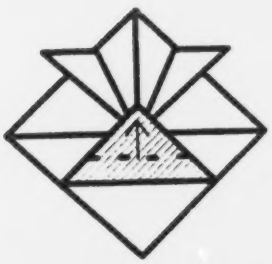

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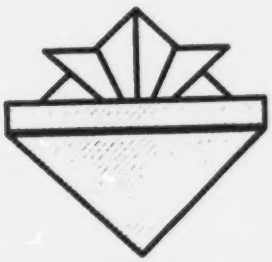
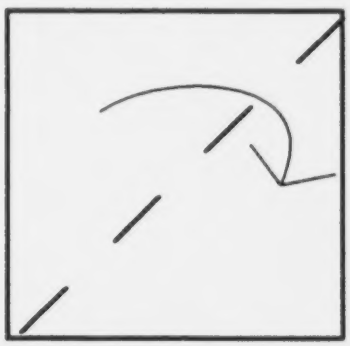


7. Fold flap up again

ORIGAMI
Whale



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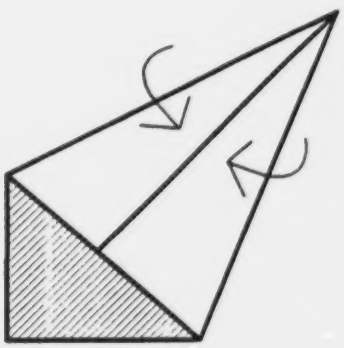

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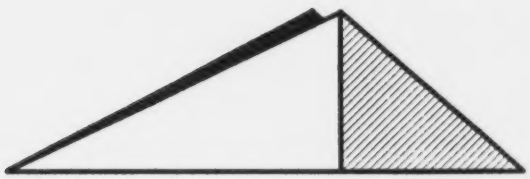

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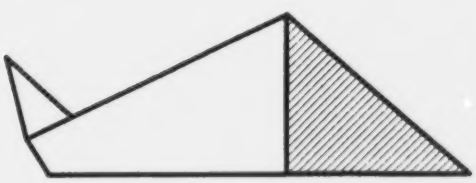
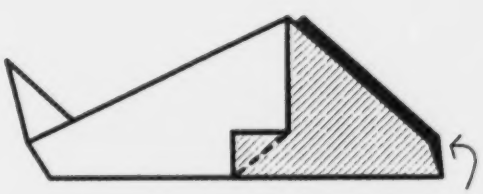
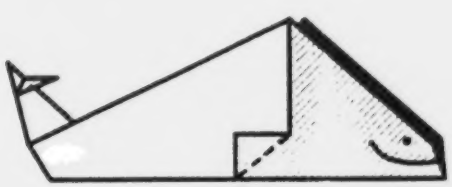


4. Fold tail back



5. Fold back fin and fold in nose



6. Cut open tail and draw on eye and mouth

TOPIC 2

JAPANESE ART FORMS: FOLKTALES AND MUSIC

Lesson

How do Japanese and American folktales and music reflect the two cultures, and what are some of their similarities and differences?

LESSON OBJECTIVES

The student will 1) give examples of how Japanese art forms reflect culture; 2) discuss the purpose of folktales in America and Japan; 3) list the Japanese rules for living that are taught in "The Ungrateful Rat"; 4) describe two types of Japanese traditional music; 5) identify the *shakuhachi, shamisen* and *koto* as musical instruments; 6) compare and contrast American and Japanese music; and 7) give examples from the history of Japanese music to illustrate Japan's creative adaptation.

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

❑ Handout 2.1 "The Ungrateful Rat"
❑ Handout 2.2 "Music in Japan"

STRATEGIES

Folktales and music are two ways people have to express both important values and creativity. "The Ungrateful Rat" is an ideal example of a story used to communicate traditional values to Japanese children such as: rewarding of respect, kindness, hard work; punishment of laziness, greed, and disrespect. This story teaches Japanese children the following lessons: Take responsibility for your own actions. Do not blame others for your own misfortune. Be satisfied with what you have. Be appreciative of others and get along. Be self-reliant. Exclusion or ostracism may result from bad choices in behavior. Mutual dependence between individuals exists and makes cooperation a necessity.

The following Japanese ideas from the story may be traced to Zen Buddhist origins: Be grateful for opportunities in life. Work hard and be self-reliant. Isolating oneself from nature is foolhardy. Isolating oneself from the group or community is a fault which may result in calamity.

Japanese music can provide good examples of the themes of tradition and change, isolation, and creative adaptation. Japan is known for its ability to borrow ideas from other countries and through time, to adapt these ideas creating a form that is distinctly Japanese (creative adaptation). Interspersed between long periods of isolation, Japan has borrowed heavily from China and Korea historically and more recently from the West.

Begin the lesson with a discussion on American folktales. Ask:

- Can you name some American folktales?
- When did you last read or hear a folktale?
- Why do you suppose we share folktales primarily with children?
- What is the purpose of folktales?
- What can we learn from folktales from other countries?

Next, tell the story of "The Ungrateful Rat" using Handout 2.1 as a reference, or have one or two student volunteers read the story aloud. After the story, discuss ideas with the class. Ask:

- What lessons would a Japanese child learn from this folktale?
- What values do Japanese people feel are very important as illustrated in the story?
- How are the American folktales we named similar to and different from this Japanese folktale?
- What overall purpose do folktales serve in Japan and in America?
- Is "The Ungrateful Rat" a Japanese art form that reflects their culture? Explain.

To close this lesson, distribute copies of Handout 2.2. After students have read them silently, ask:

- What are the two types of Japanese traditional music?
- What kind of instrument is the *shakuhachi?*
- Describe a *shamisen.*
- What does a *koto* look like? sound like?
- What kind of foreign music is popular in Japan? What is Japanese popular music like?

THE UNGRATEFUL RAT

In the spaces above a ceiling where it is pitch-black there lived a rat. One day, the rat, while walking along the Underfloor Highway, crossed the path of a weasel carrying a full load of something that looked tasty. The weasel paused a moment briefly when he saw the rat and told him where to get some of the treat. The weasel spoke quickly, "Hey rat! A lot of sugar balls have come through the hole in the closet at your place. Hurry and get some."

The rat scurried off heading for the closet without a thank you to the weasel. In great anticipation he surveyed the place beneath the closet. He drew to attention when he felt something prickling his leg and heard the tiny voice of an ant shrilly barking a command to him, "Halt! Who goes there!"

The rat was astonished by the sight of dozens of ants busily organized breaking up the sugar balls and dissolving them to carry back to their nest. The rat stared at the operation quivering with fright. Another deep voiced ant sent him scurrying for home into his space in the ceiling as he shouted, "No entrance to you. Be gone quickly!"

There in his space in the ceiling, he stayed in his nest infuriated at what had happened to him. The ants, of course, are powerful, nothing could be done about that. The one he was angry with was the weak weasel who had involved him in the mess to start with. He decided to confront the weasel with his anger, so he sneaked out of his nest again to go to the weasel's home in back of the timber shed.

The weasel, who was preparing some corn by grinding it to powder with his teeth, saw the rat and said, "Well, didn't you find any sugar balls?"

"Weasel, I think you're terrible to deceive someone weak like me."

"Deceive? Nonsense. There was some there all right."

"Oh, it was there, but the ants had already found it."

"Ants? Had they now? They are mighty quick."

"The ants took all the sugar balls. You should pay compensation for deceiving someone weak like me. Yes, you should pay!"

"It's not my fault. You were a bit too late, that's all."

"You should not have deceived someone weak like me. I want compensation!"

"You can't even appreciate someone's kindness. All right, if you like, I'll give you my sugar balls."

"Compensation! Make it up to me!"

"Here, take my own sugar balls. Take what you can carry and get out. I am sick of you!"

In a rage, the weasel threw the treats out to the rat. The rat picked up as many as he could carry and then bowed.

Even angrier, the weasel shouted, "I don't want the ones that you can't carry either. I'll give them all to the maggots," and he threw them out too.

The rat rushed straight to his nest where he enjoyed the sugar balls.

The rat regularly behaved this way to others, and so he gradually became disliked by all. No one would have anything to do with him. He resorted to associating with pillars, broken dust pans, buckets, brooms and the like. His special friend was the pillar.

One day the pillar said to the rat, "Winter is on its way and you'll need some stuffing for your nest to keep you warm. I have thought of offering the feathers and fluff and the other warm stuff that you will find at the top of me. The sparrows bring it each spring to put at my head for their nest. Why don't you get some down for yourself while it is still warm? My head may get a bit chilly without it, but I'll manage somehow."

That sounded good to the rat, so right away he began the task. Once he almost slipped and fell getting down with his load. Another trip down he did fall off the slope. The pillar cried with concern, "Are you hurt, rat? Are you hurt?"

Soon the rat got up. With an angry look on his face, he said, "Pillar, I am shocked that you would let this happen to me, so weak a creature. You should be ashamed and I want compensation for this."

The pillar, feeling responsible for what had happened, but unable to pay compensation, felt worse and worse as he continued to apologize; and the rat continued to make demands.

The rat had no alternative but to return to his nest. The pillar from then on was too scared to speak to the rat again. Sometime later the dust pan gave the rat a crumb of cake that someone had left. The next day when the rat got a stomachache, he blamed the dust pan, flew into a rage, and demanded that the dust pan pay him compensation. The dust pan was so filled with resentment for the rat's attitude that he no longer associated with him at all.

Still later on, the bucket gave the rat a piece of washing soda and told him to wash his face each morning. The rat did so and was pleased. When his whiskers fell out though, he went to the bucket and angrily demanded compensation. Over and over, at least one hundred times, he said, "Pay me. Pay me." Since the bucket did not have whiskers or any other way to pay back the rat, he was at a complete loss as to what to do. He wept, apologized, and never said another word.

One by one, all the inhabitants of the kitchen learned to avoid the rat. They even winced and shut their eyes at the sight of him. Only one of them had not yet had anything to do with the rat. It was the rat trap made of woven wire.

Rat traps should be on the side with the humans, you would expect, but not this one. He had recently seen a newspaper ad of a rat trap beside a cat with both labeled "disposable." Because of the ad, he was angry with humans these days. Even before the ads, people had avoided touching him as though he were dirty. So the rat trap had less appreciation for humans than he did for rats. Most rats were too afraid of him to come near though. Even when he would call to them gently saying, "Come have this mackerel head for dinner tonight. I'll hold the catch firmly while you eat it. I have no sympathy for humans these days either." The rats did not trust him though and most would not come near.

Each morning the red-faced manservant would put in fresh bait still hoping for success. That night the trap called out softly, "Tonight there is some nice soft fish cake. It's safe. You can just have the bait," said the trap to the rat who approached.

"Sure just the bait. I haven't seen you here before." The rat paused, scurried inside, ate the bait, and jumped back out saying, "Thanks. That was good."

"Was it? I am glad. Come again tomorrow night."

The next morning the manservant was angry that the bait was gone and no rat was in the trap! He reset the trap with a sardine.

That night the rat returned and said in a patronizing tone, "Good evening. I have come again as you asked me to."

The trap was annoyed but swallowed his pride and said, "Help yourself."

The rat enjoyed the sardine, popped back out and said haughtily, "I'll come and eat again for you tomorrow night."

The trap grumbled.

The next morning the manservant was furious with the trap. "You've taken a bribe, haven't you?"

"I did not. Don't insult me so."

The manservant, of course, could not hear the trap. This time he left a piece of rotten fish cake in the trap.

All day the trap grew angrier and angrier because he had been so unjustly accused.

When the rat appeared that night he said, "It's not easy to come all the way here, but here I am. I guess I should help you out by eating the bait."

The trap was so angry that he was in a rage and all he could say was "Help yourself" as he quivered.

The rat popped inside and shuddered at the spoiled fish cake saying, "Trap, this is ridiculous. How can you cheat a weak creature like me. This fish cake is rotten. I want compensation."

The trap quivered until it rattled, snapped and shut fast. It was locked.

The rat was dashing in circles, biting the wire, scratching, shrieking and crying, "Terrible trap! Liar! Cheat!" This time, he did not have the courage to ask for compensation. The trap and the rat had to put up with each other until morning when the manservant with the bright red face came to check the trap. He jumped for joy when he saw the rat in the trap crying out for help.

"Got him! Got him! Caught him at last. And a nasty looking brute he is too. Come on out! Come on out, my beauty."

From *Winds from Afar*, recorded from Kenji Miyazawa, translated by John Bester and retold by Valerie Sheehan (Palo Alto: Kodahsha, 1972).

MUSIC IN JAPAN

There are two types of traditional Japanese music: art music and folk music. Art music has several different styles, each of which was established separately in different periods of Japanese history. The Japanese have maintained those time-honored styles, modifying them as time has passed.

In the sixteenth century, three ancient Japanese instruments were modified and enhanced. The primitive recorder became the artistic *shakuhachi,* a type of flute with a breathy sound. *Shakuhachi* was originally played as part of a Buddhist service and was a favorite instrument among wandering priests.

The old court zither was refined and became the more sonorous *koto,* a stringed instrument that is set on the floor. The performer kneels behind the *koto* and plucks the strings.

The *shamisen* is a three-stringed guitar similar to the Russian *balalaika. Shamisen* became the favorite instrument played by *geisha* in the entertainment districts of the larger Japanese cities during the Edo period.

FOLKSONGS

A great number of folk songs exist in different provinces of Japan. Most of these songs were originally associated with religious events or daily labor, such as farming, working in the mountains, and packhorse driving. However, now that the lifestyles which generated those songs have drastically changed, they have lost their relationship to the original functions and are generally sung for recreational purposes except in the Okinawa region where folk songs are still alive in daily life.

POPULAR MUSIC

The Japanese enjoy various types of popular music. Beside Japanese popular music which has the largest number of fans, American jazz and pops, French *chanson,* Latin music from South America, and *canzone* from Italy have always attracted listeners. In recent times rock, soul, and folk music from the U.S. have become very popular, especially among young people.

Popular songs which have become hits in Europe and the U.S. are immediately introduced into Japan. A wide range of foreign performers are constantly--and very successfully--appearing in concert in Japan. Those songs are also sung by Japanese popular singers either in the original form or in Japanese translation.

WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC

Every conceivable form of Western music is performed, composed, and enjoyed in Japan today. At the apex of musical performance groups is the NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) Symphony Orchestra in Tokyo. There are also many performing groups for chamber music, choral music, opera and ballet.

TOPIC 3

FAMILY LIFE IN JAPAN: CHANGING TIMES

Lesson

How is Japanese family life changing, and what are some similarities and differences between Japanese and American family life?

LESSON OBJECTIVES

The student will 1) describe family life in Japan and some changes that have taken place affecting family life in the past generation; 2) compare some aspects of Japanese family life with family life in the United States; and 3) identify and analyze problems resulting from changes in Japanese family life.

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- ❑ Handout 3.1 "The *Ie*"
- ❑ Handout 3.2 "Family Life"
- ❑ Handout 3.3 "Changes in Family Life"
- ❑ Handout 3.4 "Marriage"
- ❑ Handout 3.5 "Houses"

STRATEGIES

Understanding the importance of the family in Japan is essential to understanding Japanese society. From their family Japanese first learn social values such as the importance of "we," the need for cooperation, and group loyalty that is so important later in their lives in school, work and other societal groups.

Discuss student perspectives of Japanese family life. Ask:

- What do you know about Japanese family life?
- What have you learned about the role of the children? The father? The mother?

Next, divide students into groups of six to eight. Distribute copies of all the readings (Handouts 3.1 - 3.5) to groups of students. As students finish they may swap articles as time permits. Direct students to look for descriptions of roles of family members, family traditions, and other aspects of family life in Japan, any changes that have taken place, and living conditions today. On the board, or the overhead projector, draw four columns, heading them (1) family roles, (2) family traditions, (3) living conditions today, (4) changes noted. As students make reports on the articles, have them list each point under one or more of these headings.

Discuss and compare the listings. Note the implications and possible problems inherent in the changes noted.

Compare family life in the U.S. with family life in Japan. Ask students to compare:

- roles of mother and father and the relationship of husband and wife;
- role and treatment of children;
- role and treatment of other adults in the household (grandparents); and
- design and use of housing (include attention to furnishings, consumer goods, etc.).

THE *IE*

Ie is a Japanese word for the family system. As it developed historically the *ie* was the basic unit in which the household held power. In traditional Japan, the household head was a male; he was the official representative of the family. Women were submissive to the male head. Household problems were resolved within the household. The husband led in the resolution of quarrels and the wife obeyed. The *ie* relationship was also described as a personal relationship common to many groups. It was a vertical relationship between a patron and protégé, landlord and tenant, master and disciple. What mattered was local and personal contact. Individuality was seldom encouraged as "we" was more important than "I."

Although some contend that the traditional family system no longer exists in increasingly urban Japanese society, elements of *ie* continue to persist and can be observed at least in modified form in the family, workplace, political parties and other group settings.

FAMILY LIFE

Before World War II, Japanese families tended to be rather large, with perhaps five or six children, their parents and frequently their grandparents all living in the same house. Parental authority was strong. Fathers commanded respect and obedience from their children, and in turn offered the same to their own parents. Married women were expected to obey their husbands and their husbands' parents. Since the war, however, many changes have occurred in the Japanese family as a result of democratic reforms, widespread Western influences, and rapid economic growth.

The number of nuclear families--only parents and children living together--has increased dramatically, and now accounts for 75 percent of all Japanese households (not counting single-person households). Family size has dropped considerably, with most young Japanese today choosing to have only one or two children. Many grandparents still live with their children, typically with the oldest son, but many are now living by themselves. Rural youth are also moving to the cities to work after graduation from school. Typically they live in their own apartments or in dormitories provided by their companies.

Although family lifestyles vary as much in modern Japan as in the United States, Japanese family life generally places greater stress on parental respect and mutual responsibility. Children have a strong sense of obligation toward their parents and feel responsible for taking care of them in their retirement years--a duty which usually falls to the oldest son who may also be expected to take over the family business and the family home.

Children also feel responsible toward each other. Younger children call their oldest brother and sister by special expressions of respect: *onisan* (older brother) and *onesan* (older sister). The oldest children, in turn, will look after their younger brothers and sisters, perhaps helping them with their schoolwork or babysitting for them. These close relationships continue even into adulthood. It is not uncommon, for example, for an oldest son to provide financial assistance to his younger brothers or sisters in times of emergency.

Japanese families are usually very closely knit groups. Many small shops and restaurants are run as family affairs, with the father and mother working side by side and the older children helping out after school. Fathers who work for large companies usually do not come home from work until late at night, but they will try to spend time with their children on weekends. Family outings--hiking in the mountains, picnics, trips to the beach, or just an afternoon drive in the countryside--are common Saturday and Sunday activities.

Childcare, cooking, washing, cleaning and other housework have long been considered the wife's duty, with the husband responsible for bringing home an income. But these traditional

male/female roles have blurred in recent years. More husbands are doing hosehold chores, and more wives are taking outside jobs. In fact, a large number of married women today go back to work after the children enter school. Even so, in many families, the father will handle matters outside the home, while the mother is responsible for day-to-day management of household affairs. Most husbands hand their paychecks directly to their wives, who are responsible for managing the family budget and paying all bills.

Above all, as in other countries, it is the universal human feelings of love and affection that bind Japanese families closely together. If one watches Japanese TV, one quickly discovers that although customs, language and tradition are different, human relations are really much like those in the United States. People everywhere are motivated by the same types of emotions. Indeed, soap operas that portray the problems of a young mother with her mother-in-law are just as common Japan as in America!

From *What I Want to Know About Japan* (New York Consulate General of Japan, 1991), pp. 41-43.

CHANGES IN FAMILY LIFE

Despite the advance of women into many spheres of society outside the home, they continue to consider the home extremely important, and the family continues to play a very crucial function in a society where interpersonal relationships and obligations can be very demanding, as a place of warmth and refuge. Families have their own distinctive "cultures"--traditions and customs passed down only within their own circle, flavors and styles of food passed from mother to daughter and daughter-in-law--that forge strong bonds of dependence/indulgence among their members, and the image of the family whose members eat meals together, and laugh and talk together, is still treasured. Until quite recently, the *atatakai katei* was sustained through the daily presence (if somewhat aloof and detached) of the father in the home, the sacrificial devotion of women, and the clamor and merriment of the four to five children they reared As long as this wholeness of the family remained, women could find ample fulfillment and sense of their personal worth in exchange for selfless devotion.

But the decrease in the number of children, whose presence is key to the maintenance of a mutually nurturing family, to only one or perhaps two, and the increasing absence from the home of the fathers as corporate soldiers deployed on the front lines of economic growth (in extreme cases, absent for years on end) have undermined the foundations of the warm and comforting family. Many of the chores performed by women in the home now have short cuts (with processed foods, housecleaning or laundry services, etc.), and work and a variety of other attractive activities are now accessible outside the home.

Women are beginning to feel more attracted to the pleasures to be found outside and the bonds to be forged with other women than to the traditional domestic arts and challenges of creating a home. Younger women following in the footsteps of the first postwar generation are not convinced that they have to suppress their own desires and restrain their own activities in order to maintain the home. This being the case, in what way will women go about homemaking and child-rearing in the years to come?

Since maintaining what is considered the ideal home requires, above all, time and money, several things are likely to happen: (a) the number of women working in part-time jobs will continue to increase; (b) women will make their husbands and children put up with fewer household services or try to mobilize other family members to cooperate in performing household chores, (c) the money-is-time approach will be adopted, as women seek to free their time from household tasks by purchasing professional services; and (d) the household may be strengthened by expanding the concept of the household, pursuing a new type of household which can accommodate both homemaking and community involvement.

(a) At a time when Japan is suffering a labor shortage, a major issue regarding part-time work is whether the women in these jobs can be satisfied despite their low status. It is still rare for women employed as "part-time" (i e., not on the regular payroll though they may work full-time

hours) tobe put in management positions, although such cases are gradually increasing. As mentioned in the discussion of identity above, however, these women firmly resist the working patterns of men and are determined to set aside time to pursue pleasurable activities, so they do not necessarily think that their choice of the part-time option necessarily places them in a position of inequality or inferiority. It is also significant that in Japanese society, achievement in many of the great variety of amateur arts that one can pursue is accorded a value nearly as high as that of success in corporate employment or a profession. This factor makes even less clear the question of equality between men and women. For example, a salaried worker may work his way up in the company and emerge at the top, but he will ultimately be forced to retire at the predetermined age and quickly be reduced to a status-less retiree. His wife, on the other hand, may not be able to boast a management position, but if, for example, she is a tea ceremony teacher of many years' experience, there is no retirement age; her status will continue to rise as she gets older and continues to practice her avocation, and the respect she enjoys will be all the greater. No wonder women become so intensely involved in these pursuits.

(b) If men are to take on a greater share of housework and child-rearing responsibilities, male attitudes will have to change considerably, but this will be difficult to achieve unless a five-day work week is adopted throughout the country and working hours are drastically decreased. It also calls for employment opportunities closer to home to reduce commuting time. Only once this kind of environment is created will it be possible to test whether women really want to share housekeeping shifts with their husbands, whether they will willingly forfeit the considerable freedom of activity they have garnered within the old sex role patterns in exchange for sharing the burden of housekeeping/child-rearing chores with their husbands. In big cities like Tokyo, where it is extremely difficult to live comfortably or economically very close to places of employment, such an environment will be difficult to achieve. Households are more likely to continue to revolve around women who wish in vain for greater involvement of their husbands in the home. Yet the absence of the husband from the home can actually be a boon for many women.

One reason that Japanese women are less angry than American counterparts about the lack of sharing household and child-rearing tasks with their husbands may be that, unlike American men, Japanese husbands are not present in the home many times when they are needed. In other words, the fact that they do not cooperate is not because they choose not to help around the house; it is because they are simply not there enough of the time. Their absence helps to prevent the inequity of burden-sharing from becoming an immediate source of tension between husband and wife, as vividly illustrated in *Second Shift.* Since women exploit that absence instead of resenting it, the tension of unfair distribution of burdens is dispersed. Another phenomenon that alleviates the tension of unbalanced sex roles is the increasing numbers of men posted to long-term assignments in other cities in Japan or overseas (*tanshin funin).* Once on their own in other places, these men find themselves having to perform chores such as laundry, cleaning, and at least some shopping and cooking that they never or rarely had to do while living at home, and the experience has been valuable in preparing them to assume some responsibility for

household tasks. Often they return from stints living away from home better equipped to share housekeeping burdens with their wives, although they still may not have the time to do so or be expected to do so by their wives.

In households where fathers are often absent, Japanese women function in the roles of both mother and father, assuming both so-called masculine and feminine roles in the family. The same sort of adaptability is beginning to develop among men who take work transfers alone as well. A notable development in Japan today is that both Japanese men and women, perhaps not as the result of a conscious choice but in response to current circumstances, are gradually being nudged away from traditional male/female behavior and toward androgynous, i.e., more flexible, situationally adaptable, behavior and roles.

(c) Another means of maintaining a nurturing home is money-centered. Instead of mobilizing the time and labor of family members, their earnings can be used to purchase the basic household services that were once regarded as part of the wife/mother domain. Women are more and more motivated to work in order to earn the money to obtain such services, and their preoccupation with work in turn heightens their reliance on external services. It can be a vicious circle, in which women rely on external services in order to free themselves from household and child-rearing tasks to such a degree that they eventually cannot maintain their lives *without* relying on those services. If it means that women have less control over their own lives, therefore, reliance on external services may not necessarily be the best path to happiness.

Over-reliance on the pecuniary solution to problems (purchased meals, children brought up by strangers) can also be a source of uncertainty and pressure. The double income of two working parents may provide great monetary affluence, but the tradeoff is often the impoverishment of their lives in other respects. Although it is predictable what would happen if the monetary solution were to become widespread, for the time being women welcome all the external services they can get, pursuing the romanticized image of the urban, service-oriented family depicted in the mass media.

(d) Another challenge faced by women in maintaining the family is presented by the aging society. Many women are hardly freed from the years of training and nurturing small children and on the verge of becoming involved in activities outside the home when they find themselves hamstrung again by the need to care for elderly parents. The number of only children has increased, and it two such children marry, they may have as many as four elderly parents of advanced age to look after. Today, the majority of households are nuclear, so it is often even more difficult for families to adapt and adjust to the care of one or more physically weakened elderly relatives than it was in the three-generation households of old. The number of women actively seeking public support for care of the aged is increasing, and in the aging society that Japan is, it is quite possible that the elderly and their children will be competing for the same public funds. In coping with the problems of the aging society, most of the women of the first postwar generation are working to strengthen their networks of friendship and

acquaintance and seeking to help each other by creating a new type of non-kin "extended family" based on horizontal rather than vertical groups.

From *Japanese Women in Transition: Trends in the Early 1990s*, Iwao Sumiko, (Tokyo: International Society for Educational Information, Inc.)

MARRIAGE

One of the most noticeable changes in women is in the quantity and quality of the education they receive. The upsurge in the number of women who have been educated alongside men in the coeducational institutions of the postwar period led women to realize that, at least intellectually, they are not inferior to men, and this realization has strengthened their belief in the equality of the sexes.

With their high level of education (95.3 percent graduate from senior high school; 39.2 percent of women [36.3 percent of men] from college, 1991 figures), married women are no longer content to stay at home devoting all their time to keeping house and caring for children. The sharp rise in the number of women who rejoin the work force after their children enter primary school and the enormous numbers engaged in cultural or academic pursuits attest to this. All around the country, women are turning their gaze outward, becoming active in areas once dominated by men, such as landscape gardening, architecture, and jobs in international organizations. Many are reexamining the direction of their lives Some are rebelling against the precept that women should live their lives for others and are resolved to do things that make them happy. Accepting suffering and making sacrifices, formerly considered virtues, are no longer seen by the younger generation as desirable behavior.

The reexamination of female norms begins with marriage. The idea of "marriageable age" used to hold strong sway over Japanese. Men and women who were still single by their respective marriageable ages (for women the cutoff age was 25) made every effort to find a spouse as quickly as possible. Nowadays the range of options open to women is much wider, and they are in no rush to go to the altar. Today only about 14 percent of 24-year-old women are married. The average age of first marriage is up to 25.8 for women and 28.5 for men (1990 figures)--one year higher than the respective national averages ten years ago--and in big cities like Tokyo people are marrying even later.

Although Japanese women do marry for love and regardless of the circumstances in some cases, most tend to take a highly pragmatic approach to marriage. They consider a proposal from various angles and then make a decision. And they have a rather detailed shopping list, topped by what are popularly referred to as the "three highs," namely the requirements that a husband be highly educated, have a high income, and be physically high--tall, that is. In the days when women could not support themselves financially and men were incapable of looking after themselves, people simply had to get married. But today women can easily earn enough to live on. Many single women live at home with their parents, which means that they can use practically their entire salaries on discretionary spending They may have to endure some parental meddling, but basically they lead lives of great comfort.

Many young women have grown up with all their maternal wants satisfied, and unless they fall in love with a man they know will be a reliable marriage partner, they are extremely reluctant to forgo their income and freedom. The women of their mothers' generation, starting marriage in the difficult years after the end of World War II, took it for granted that husbands and wives would start out modestly and pool their efforts to build a better life. But women in their twenties take comfort for granted, and money occupies a central place in their value systems. They want a husband who already earns a substantial sum. Most young men have insufficient incomes to satisfy these women's demands, and this can be a reason they are rejected as marriage partners.

Two further problems today inhibit marriage among the young. One is the gap in attitudes between men and women. Men do not fully grasp the extent to which women have changed, and consequently are unable to respond appropriately to these changes. The other problem is a simple matter of demographics. Among people in their twenties and thirties single men outnumber single women by 2.5 million; in Tokyo alone some 500,000 men will be unable to find a spouse (1990 survey).

This means that a lot of men are falling by the wayside in marriage. A myriad of matchmaking services have sprung up; about 5,000 are in business today. There are even cases of large companies setting up in-house marriage consultation desks for their male employees, whose long hours at work do not leave them time for dating. Such firms' concern for their employees is commendable and bespeaks the severity of the problem. But this response flies in the face of the attitudes of young men today, most of whom do not want the company meddling in their private affairs.

The situation is even more serious in rural areas. Unlike people with jobs in the city, men with farms depend heavily on their families for help with their work and remaining single is not a realistic option. Mayors from rural areas have unsuccessfully combed Japan in search of brides for the men in their villages, and they are now going abroad to Thailand, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, and South Korea. Many women from the Philippines have come to Japan and married men in rural areas. Villagers who once had little contact with people from other parts of Japan are now living and working alongside people from totally different cultures. In this way, Japanese women have inadvertently contributed to the internationalization of farming communities.

The trend toward late marriage notwithstanding, most women plan to wed eventually. The proportion of women who have been married at least once by age 30 is 63 percent, and by age 35, 88 percent (1990 figures). But their attitudes toward marriage have changed drastically. Traditionally, the ideal was for husband and wife to be like air to each other. This did not mean that the relationship should lack substance. Rather, it meant that though it was as vital and indispensable as air, it need not be consciously or palpably felt; husbands' and wives' mutual affection, devotion and concern was supposed to be so tacitly accepted and nonverbally expressed that their relationship rested as lightly and unconsciously as air in their daily lives. When we become conscious of the air we breathe, it is a sign of a physical crisis; when the marital

relationship had to be consciously dealt with, it was thought, the bond was in danger. At the root of this attitude was the Japanese tendency to trust in long-term relationships. Just like the air they breathe, people took it for granted that their spouses would always be there.

Younger people, particularly women, want more companionship from their spouses. The problem is that among urban and suburban families, the husband works long hours, often faces a long commute, and simply does not have much time to spend at home. Married couples find it difficult to respond adequately to the need for companionship even before children are born and less once a baby enters the picture. After that the household begins to revolve around the children, and this situation generally continues until the children enter college or go out to work.

From *Japanese Women in Transition: Trends in the Early 1990s*, Iwao Sumiko, (Tokyo: International Society for Education Information, Inc.)

HOUSES

Japanese houses are well suited for the country's climate. Since the weather is damp during the rainy season and often hot during the summer, houses are typically built for maximum ventilation. Most interior rooms have at least one or two walls that consist of sliding doors called *fusuma*. These doors, together with wide sliding doors on the outside walls, can be closed to prevent drafts.

Because the winter is mild in most parts of the country, houses typically do not have central heating. Instead, rooms used for daily living are located in the center of the house and are surrounded by long corridors that offer protection and insulation from the weather. In winter only rooms in use are heated, usually by small gas or kerosene heaters called *sutohbu,* a term adapted from the English word "stove."

In winter, Japanese also often sit around *kotatsu,* a wooden frame containing an electric heater, over which a quilt or blanket is thrown. These *kotatsu* are usually about the same size as a table, but with shorter legs. They are an excellent way to keep one's feet and legs warm. On a cold winter evening, many families gather around the *kotatsu,* perhaps to watch television or simply share each other's company. The *kotatsu* thus serves much the same social function as a fireplace in an American home. Largely because of the frugal use of energy for heating, homes in Japan consume less energy than American homes.

Because land is scarce, Japanese houses are generally much smaller than American houses. They have about the same amount of floor space as homes in France or Germany--countries which like Japan are rather densely populated. As might be expected, homes in Japan's urban areas (e.g., 982 square feet in Tokyo) tend to be smaller with less adjoining land than homes in rural areas (e.g., 1840 square feet in Niigata).

Japanese rooms do not have much furniture and are often used for several purpose--sleeping, eating, living and playing. To conserve space, Japanese sleep on *futon,* or folding mattresses, which are spread out on the floor at night and stored away in closets during the day. Except for the kitchen and perhaps a carpeted living room, floors are covered with *tatami,* or straw mats, which are comfortable to sit on and provide insulation in the winter.

Usually, one room in a house will have a *tokonoma,* a small alcove where flower arrangements are displayed and scroll paintings are hung. There is also usually a small shelf containing a miniature Shinto shrine and a Buddhist altar where offerings are made to ancestral spirits.

Before World War II, almost all buildings in Japan were made of wood and had ricestraw or tile roofs. Most buildings were only one or two stories high because of the constant danger of

earthquakes. In the last decade or two, as lumber has risen in price, Japanese have begun using concrete, aluminum and other modern building materials. Many homes today are of prefabricated construction. New advances in earthquake-proof technology have also made it possible to build skyscrapers of 60 stories and more, which are radically changing the skylines of Japanese cities.

All Japanese homes today have electricity and running water, and most have flush toilets. About 64 percent of all Japanese families live in houses they own, while about 28% percent live in rented houses or apartments. The remainder live in public housing (5 percent) or in company provided housing (45 percent).

To most Americans, Japanese homes might seem small and cramped, but after one has lived in Japan for a period of time and adjusted to Japanese lifestyles, Japanese homes lose their sense of smallness. By the same token, when Japanese arrive in the United States, they at first feel lost in the spacious scale of American homes.

The Japanese house is well adapted to the needs of Japanese society. Its compact scale helps reinforce the closely knit structure of the Japanese family. All family members live closely together and must regulate their behavior to avoid conflicts. Outside the home, Japanese like to feel that they belong to groups (such as one's classmates or coworkers). Japanese society places considerable importance on striving for harmony and cooperation in human relations.

From *What I Want to Know About Japan* (New York: Consulate General of Japan, 1991), pp. 35-36.

TOPIC 4

JAPANESE SCHOOLS: IS CHANGE NEEDED?

Lesson
How do Japanese schools compare with American schools?

LESSON OBJECTIVES

The student will 1) describe the basic pattern of schooling in Japan; 2) compare Japanese schooling with schooling in the U.S.; and 3) relate the meaning and significance of "Examination Hell."

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

❑ Handout 4.1 "Curriculum in a Tokyo Metropolitan Upper Secondary School"
❑ Handout 4.2 "School"
❑ Handout 4.3 "Examination Hell"

STRATEGIES

Schooling in Japan has captured media and public attention in the United States because of Japanese economic and technological advances and, because in international comparisons of student achievement, Japanese students are at or near the top. This lesson provides students with an opportunity to learn about the Japanese school system and the emphasis the Japanese have placed on sorting students through rigorous testing as students attempt to move from one school level to another and into the job market.

Begin this lesson by asking students "In what ways would you expect Japanese schools to be like ours? What differences would you expect?" After discussion, show a transparency or distribute copies of Handout 4.1, "Curriculum in a Tokyo Metropolitan Upper Secondary School." Remind students that grades 1, 2 and 3 in upper elementary school are comparable to our high school grades 10, 11 and 12. Ask "How does the curriculum in this Tokyo school compare to ours?"

Distribute copies of Handout 4.2, "School." Tell students that this reading gives an overview of schools in Japan. Ask the following questions for discussion:

- Does what you just read verify what you know?
- What do Japanese students do to show respect to their teachers?
- How would you feel about cleaning the classrooms you use? How do you think this makes the Japanese students feel?

Next, distribute copies of Handout 4.3, "Examination Hell." Tell students that it describes the testing process Japanese educators use to find out which students will move to a college track

program. Have them read the article to compare the Japanese system with ours. After students have read the handout, ask:

- What role does testing play in the Japanese system?
- How is the decision made in the U.S. about whether a student pursues courses that lead to college admission?
- Have we moved toward the Japanese position on testing in recent years? Explain.
- What are some problems of the Japanese system? What are some advantages?
- How does the balance of strengths and problems compare to our system?
- Which system would you prefer? Why?

To conclude this lesson the teacher may wish to have students write a short essay on how their school experience would be different if the U.S. adopted the Japanese model.

CURRICULUM IN A TOKYO METROPOLITAN UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL

Subject Areas	Subjects	Standard Number of Credits	Grade				
			1st (Hours)	2nd (Hours)	3rd (Hours)		
					Common	*Elective (by Course)*	*Elective (free)*
Japanese Language	Japanese Language I	4	5				
	Japanese Language II	4		5			
	Japanese Language Expression	2					2
	Contemporary Japanese Language	3			3		
	Classics	4				4	
Social Studies	Contemporary Society	4	4				
	Japanese History	4				4	2
	World History	4		2	2		2
	Geography	4		2		2	2
	Ethics	2					2
	Politics and Economy	2					2
Mathematics	Mathematics I	4	5				
	Mathematics II	3					
	Algebra and Geometry	3		3			2
	Basic Analysis	3		3			2
	Differential and Inegral Calculus	3				4	
	Probability and Statistics	3				4	
Science	Science I	4	5				
	Science II	2					2
	Physics	4		2		4	2
	Chemistry	4		2		4	2
	Biology	4				4	2
	Earth Science	4					
Health and Physical Education	Physical Education	Boys 11 Girls 7	4 2	4 2	3 3		12
	Health	2	1	1			
Art	Music I	2	2				
	Music II	2		2			
	Music III	2					2
	Fine Arts I	2	2				
	Fine Arts II	2		2			
	Fine Arts III	2					2
	Calligraphy I	2	2				
	Calligraphy II	2		2			
	Calligraphy III	2					2
Foreign Languages	English I	4	6				
	English II	5		3	3		2
	English IIA	3					
	English IIB	3			3		2
	English IIC	3		3			2
Home Economics	General Home Economics	4	2	2			2
	Food	2	*girls*	*girls*			2
	Clothing	2	*only*	*only*			2
	Nursing	2					
Total for All Subjects			32	32	14	10-12	
Homeroom Activities		1	1	1	1		
Club Activities		1	1	1	1		
GRAND TOTAL			34	34	26-34		

SCHOOL

Japan's educational system has five stages: kindergarten (one to three years), elementary school (six years), middle school (three years), high school (three years) and university (four years). Education is compulsory for nine years (elementary through middle school) and is provided free at public schools to all children between the ages of six and fifteen. Japanese law stresses equality of educational opportunity for all citizens. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, creed, gender, social status, economic position or family background.

Normally students enter elementary school at age six and graduate from middle school at age fifteen. Typical courses in elementary school include Japanese language, social studies, mathematics, science, music, arts and handicrafts, homemaking, physical education and ethics. These same courses are taught in middle school, but at more advanced levels. Entrance to high school and university is based upon competitive examination. Since these examinations are rigorous and competition for admission to the better schools is fierce, students will spend long hours studying in preparation for them. The senior year of high school is popularly called *shiken jigoku* (exam hell). At present, 94 percent of all middle school students go on to high school, while about 36 percent of all high school graduates enroll in universities. For students not wishing to pursue higher education, there are vocational and technical schools, both for middle school graduates and for high school graduates.

The Japanese school year begins on April 1 and ends on March 31 of the following year. In elementary and middle school, there are three semesters: April-July, September-December, and January-March. High school students have either two or three semesters. Vacations are granted in summer (usually six week in July and August), winter (around New Year's Holiday), and spring (two or three weeks after the annual examinations).

According to Japanese tradition, great respect should be shown to teachers, who are called *sensei*, or literally "first born." Classes begin and end with students bowing to their teachers. In elementary and middle schools (and in many high schools) students are responsible for helping to keep the buildings and grounds clean. It is not uncommon for students in the same homeroom class to spend several hours a week after class sweeping hallways and raking the playgrounds.

As in the United States, class trips and outings to museums, historical sites and other places are common at all grade levels in Japan. In the middle and senior high schools, students in the same class usually go on annual school excursions with their teachers. Often these excursions last as long as a week (with overnight stops at inns), and include tours of famous historical sites such as the ancient capitals of Nara and Kyoto. For many students, these excursions are the highlight of the school year.

Schools also hold athletic competitions and cultural festivals, to which parents and friends are invited. The athletic competitions, held in spring or fall, feature track, gymnastics and other sporting events, while at the cultural festivals students set up booths displaying the activities and skills of the extracurricular clubs they belong to. These too are pleasant occasions for students to get away from their studies.

As in other countries, education is an important ladder to success in Japan. Most parents take a strong interest in their children's academic performance. Despite the great complexity of written Japanese, Japan has a higher literacy rate that the United States. Fully 99.7% of all Japanese can read and write their own language.

From *What I Want to Know About Japan* (New York: Consulate General of Japan, 1991), pp. 47-48.

EXAMINATION HELL

Being accepted by the right university assures later success, but the struggle for admission dominates students' lives and distorts, many argue, the content and purpose of high school.

Four years ago, 18-year-old Takehisa Kishimoto seemed virtually assured of success in life. He had just graduated from La Salle High School, a famous private school in the city of Kagoshima that annually places almost half of its class of 270 seniors in Japan's elite universities. But it was only this year, after a grueling, three-year odyssey through an academic netherworld, that Takehisa, now 22, finally became a freshman majoring in economics at Kyoto University.

Takehisa's story is one of pressure to keep pace with talented classmates, to satisfy demanding test-conscious teachers, to keep from disappointing his father, a Kyoto textile factory manager with high hopes and family finances invested in his son's future. Most of all, it is a story of test pressure, the overarching imperative to score well enough to enter the best institutions of higher learning.

Because he did not score well enough, Takehisa joined the burgeoning ranks of the country's "masterless *samurai,"* the *ronin.* Now estimated to number about a quarter of a million, the *ronin* is a peculiarly Japanese phenomenon, academic achievers who prefer failure to success at less than the highest level. Unable to gain entry to the prestigious colleges of their choice. the *ronin* shun the many others they could enter, opting instead to spend an extra year--or as long as it takes--studying to make the grade for success.

THE SINE QUA NON

Admission to college has become the *sine qua non* of modern Japanese life. Much of what happens before is preparation for it; most of what happens later is a result of it.

Being accepted by the right university can virtually assure success in government or business. Being turned down by the elite handful of universities that dominate Japanese society can derail a promising future and crush family dreams.

But Takehisa Kishimoto's struggle to enter such a university is also a symptom of what many call Japan's most vexing educational problem: the increasing reliance on examinations to track students through the system and, by extension, to structure society. It is a multidimensional problem, affecting not only equality of opportunity, but also how and what students learn, and whether or not the system will be able to adapt to meet new needs.

It is also a problem that reform-minded educators say will not yield easily to workable solutions.

SCREENING THE SENIORS

Despite recent attempts to give the more subtle indexes of talent and potential a greater weight in admissions, the selection process for colleges remains impersonal and tightly structured. Every January, high school seniors take the national Joint Achievement Test simultaneously at various locations throughout the country. These results provide a first-stage screening of applicants for the public colleges and universities, among them the highly selective "national universities" considered the nation's best.

Students scoring high enough on this massive, five-part assessment of general knowledge then go to the second stage of selection: two full days devoted to the exhaustive tests prepared by the colleges they want to enter.

Before they have even gotten to the Joint Achievement Test, however, those intent on entering prestige colleges have usually had a steady diet of test competition, vying with one another for places in the "elite" private kindergartens, the commercial after-school cram schools (*juku* and *yobiko),* and the top-flight high schools that can sometimes mean the difference between success and failure on college entrance exam.

Now, both educators and the public at large are wondering what that kind of pressure is doing to their children.

Takehisa Kishimoto says he almost welcomed his *ronin* years as time to "recover" from a high school experience he says left him "psychologically damaged."

"They expected me to be a study machine, not a human being," he complains. "There was pressure everywhere at home and at school. I had nowhere to escape. Sometimes, I would just ride my bicycle all day and keep away from classes."

Expected to score high enough to enter Tokyo University, the surest staging area for social prominence, Takehisa found instead that he was not psychologically ready for examination day when it arrived. And in the following *ronin* year, he was still reeling from exam pressure. "I had no appetite for study," he says.

A bright and talented student with excellent high school training, Takehisa failed in two attempts to pass the university's entrance examinations. (Competition is so keen for Tokyo's arduous, five-part test that the usual cutoff point for successful applicants is a score of 920 out of a possible 1,000).

Trying to salvage something academically, Takehisa suffered a third disappointment. He enrolled in a not-so-prestigious, but very expensive, college in Osaka, only to find it less intellectually stimulating than high school.

Finally, he decided to drop out again and study for one last attempt at passing the entrance exam of an elite institution. This time, he picked Kyoto University, passed its test, and was accepted last year.

ETSUKO: A DIFFERENT STORY

What made Takehisa's long struggle all the more painful, he says, was wondering whether his expensive and rigorous training at the private high school in Kagoshima had been worth it. His older sister, Etsuko, had enjoyed herself in school--and gained admission to college while attending Rakuhoku High School, which is situated across the street from her home.

Rakuhoku is a rarity in Japanese education: a neighborhood high school. Most of the country's prefectures (governmental units like provinces) have high schools that are either formally or informally ranked according to academic quality, with the better students going to the better schools. But the Kyoto prefecture, because of a liberal political heritage that includes a long period of leadership by Japan's Communist Party and a strong local union movement, de-emphasizes competition. Students attend the high schools nearest their homes.

At Rakuhoku, Etsuko attended classes with weak as well as academically able students. Her teachers put little stress on entrance examination preparation. But although she says it took a lot of independent studying to get into college, Etsuko thinks she benefited in other ways from her high school experience.

Many of her classmates were preparing to become clerks in Kyoto's commercial district, she says. "I made a lot of friends I would not have come in contact with if we had been separated by ability."

EQUALITY: THEORY VS. PRACTICE

That Etsuko's high school experience differed from her brother's, however, illustrates the role social factors play in influencing the kind and level of education available to a Japanese child. Theoretically, the single-track system imposed by postwar reforms assured equality of educational opportunity in Japan. But in reality equality gives way at the secondary school level.

Beyond compulsory schooling--which ends after the 9th grade--who a student is, where he lives, and how much his parents can afford to spend for private schools and tutoring often mean the difference in whether or not he reaches the freshman class of a top college.

Many Japanese would argue, for example, that living in Kyoto, with its reduced stress neighborhood high schools, put Etsuko at a disadvantage in the entrance examination race. A more rank-conscious system, where she was forced to complete daily with superior students, would better have served Etsuko's ambition, they would say.

Had she lived in one of Japan's remote rural areas, Etsuko's chances of going to college--any college--would have been even worse. Fewer than one in five of the high school students in these poor and isolated districts go to college. (There, Japanese educators point out, as in rural areas of the United States, traditions of family farming coupled with differing attitudes toward money and success isolate the populace to a great degree from the education pressures of urban Japan.)

Statistically, being female is also a disadvantage for a Japanese student, but Etsuko fortunately is unusually motivated. Unlike most Japanese women, she applied to a good four-year college and was accepted. Later, she studied abroad.

Even the education-conscious Kishimoto family followed the traditional pattern of putting its private school money on Takehisa. College enrollment figures show clearly the educational bias toward sons: the elite universities are more than 90 percent male; the junior colleges are more than 90 percent female.

EXAMINATION HELL

The multi-layered stress that vying for college admission exerts on students and their families has slipped into the vernacular as *shiken jigoku,* "examination hell." But, ironically, going to college in Japan is not actually that difficult.

Although hundreds of new colleges and universities have opened in the last few decades, the fact remains that as educational opportunity has expanded, the rigors of "examination hell" have increased. In prewar Japan, there were only eight Imperial universities and a dozen private colleges and universities. Today, there are more than 450 four-year colleges and an additional 520 junior colleges. But virtually none of the new institutions have joined the ranks of the most elite.

Thus, explains Noritake Kobayashi, former dean of the graduate business school at Keto University, the tremendous growth in opportunity has actually created "a kind of polarization between good and bad schools." Employers are now more, not less, likely to look to the established higher education institutions to fill top entry-level jobs, he says.

ASSESSING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL TOLL

Has the meritocracy gone awry? Many in Japan think that is very nearly the case. Japan now leads the world in school-related suicides among those in the 15-to-19-year-old age group, and in the press, reports of bizarre test-related phenomena are commonplace. [Observers] attribute their country's alarming increase in incidents of school violence--particularly assaults against teachers--to the psychological toll taken by "examination hell." They also wonder whether the hoped for surge in student creativity can emerge from a rigidly hierarchical system that makes getting into an institution more important than the learning it offers. Unfortunately, both history and their own cross-purposes tell the Japanese that the system is, at present, self-perpetuating. One school study charged that Japan's whole educational establishment

was "entirely biased to entrance examinations," producing a kind of school experience, it said, that stresses "cramming" more than discovery and learning.

TRIVIAL PURSUITS

Many Japanese educators agree. The growing intensity of test competition, they say, is distorting the learning process. Nearly 15 years ago, an international team of examiners found that Japanese students often became "more interested in examination techniques than in real learning and maturation." That assessment is even more valid today.

THE ADMISSION SWEEPSTAKES

Despite its disgruntlement, however, the public seems wholly unable to stem the examination tide. As the author Thomas Rohlen puts it: "Hardly a soul in the entire country will say anything publicly in its favor, yet private behavior feeds the competition.

Perusing Japanese newspapers and magazines during February and March will give a clear indication of how deeply ingrained in society the examination system has become. Major dailies report the number of applicants and the competition rates at the more prestigious universities, along with the number of successful applicants, by type of high school, prefecture, and year of graduation. The country's largest weekly news magazines give a two-month running commentary on the whole entrance sweepstakes, often culminating with up to 15 pages of statistical details and interviews probing what successful candidates did or did not do to pass.

Such attention is fanning the competitive flames in the educational system itself, according to Nagoya University's Mr. Fujita, pitting high schools and prefectures against one another in the race to place students in prestige colleges. It also means, he says, that Japanese education is developing in the direction of private supplemental education, not in its formal structure.

FROM PYRAMID TO RECTANGLE

The situation is no better at the prestigious private universities, like Keio and Waseda, where more than 50 percent of the 1980 freshman classes passed the entrance tests after at least one *ronin* year. The *ronin* year is so common now that educators talk of a *de facto 6-3-3-1-4* education system, rather than the *6-3-3-4* structure adopted after World War II. That extra cramming year between the three high school years and the four college years has become a necessary evil, if not an institution.

"We need to change the ranking system of colleges from a pyramid structure with Tokyo University at the top to a rectangle that guarantees relatively even quality for all colleges," says Nobuhisa Kawamura, a teacher whose private high school in Tokuyama enrolls mostly students who fail the entrance examinations for other high schools in the region. "Then," he adds, "we ought to devise a testing system that makes sense."

From *Education Week* (March 6, 1985), pp. 12-15.

TOPIC 5

THE JAPANESE AT WORK

Lesson

What are some of the characteristics of the Japanese worker and consumer?

LESSON OBJECTIVES

The student will 1) identify major reasons for Japanese economic success; 2) describe and evaluate features of the Japanese work experience; and 3) describe the changing role of Japanese women in the workplace and identify reasons for this change.

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

❑ Handout 5.1 "Where the Consumer Is King"
❑ Handout 5.2 "Headed for Trouble? Restructuring and Unemployment in Japan"

STRATEGIES

No aspect of modern Japan has received more attention in the United States than its economic development. Japanese productivity, high technology, quality control, and work ethic have helped Japan to become an economic superpower. In this lesson the focus will be primarily on the world of work. Companies organize themselves to capitalize on the strong group feelings of the Japanese and take on some of the qualities of a large family. One of the most dramatic changes in the last decade has been the changing composition of the work force as more and more women continue to work outside the home after marriage.

Begin the lesson by having students generate a short list of Japanese products. List these on the chalkboard. Ask:

- What qualities do you associate with these products?
- The high reputation of Japanese products is a relatively recent development (within the last quarter of a century). What factors do you think account for this rapid change in reputation and accompanying economic growth?

Next, distribute copies of Handout 5.1, "Where the Consumer Is King." Ask students:

- What factors affect our spending patterns?
- What kinds of stores do you like to shop in? Why? Have students read the article to compare their own responses to those provided in the article about the Japanese.

Conclude this lesson by distributing copies of Handout 5.2, "Headed for Trouble? Restructuring and Unemployment in Japan." Ask the following questions.

- How have changes in the Japanese economy affected the employment structure of Japanese companies?
- What is Professor Shimada's interpretation of the "lifetime employment" system?
- What are four processes that could possibly cause Japan to have a high-unemployment crisis?
- What can be done to prevent a high-unemployment crisis?
- How does Japan's restructuring compare to that of the United States?
- How does the employment situation for college graduates in the United States compare to that in Japan?

WHERE THE CONSUMER IS KING

By now, most of the industrialized world has become well aware of Japan's stance as the second strongest economic power in the world. It is a nation which has overcome the obstacles of limited natural resources, minimal arable land, and extreme hardship following World War II, to become a prosperous land of vast purchasing power. More than ever, Japan is a nation of alluring, unlimited market potential.

But while the market is an obvious temptation for many an exporter, it is also in many respects unknown--or perhaps more often, misunderstood. It is a unique market, complicated by an unexpected mix of the old and new: the Western-style chair sitting upon the woven tatami floor covering, or the young woman in a stylish business suit, out shopping with her *kimono*-clad mother.

To enter Japan's market with success, just as in entering any other market place in the world, it is essential that not only the modes of business be respected, but more importantly that the consumers, their lifestyles, spending patterns and preferences be understood.

The Japanese market has justly been called the most competitive in the world, and increasingly, an understanding of how to cater to it is being seen as a critical factor in both the successes, and likewise, the failures in American efforts to penetrate it.

The Japanese Government has recently sent import surveyors abroad and sponsored import fairs at home in an extraordinary attempt to improve market opportunities and reduce the trade imbalance. Now, it seems, is a good time to look at Japanese society to see where the money comes from and on what it is being spent.

COMPENSATION SYSTEM IS A KEY

Japan's employment and compensation systems have a noticeable effect on spending patterns. Close to one-third of the male labor force is employed under the well-known lifetime employment system, hired immediately after graduation and expected to remain within the same firm until retirement at age 55 or 60. Income generally rises with age, meaning that compensation is highly predictable--major expenditures are often planned years in advance.

Also unique to Japan's compensation system is the bonus, ranging from one to three times the monthly paycheck and given to salaried workers twice each year. Roughly half of this sum is often added to savings, while the remainder may be used for loan repayments and major purchases of durables. As these bonuses are paid in midsummer and December, a good share of Japan's consumer buying power is concentrated within two peak periods. It is during these times of the year when consumers are more apt to purchase higher priced, superior quality foods, accessories

and gifts, giving both importers and domestic manufacturers two prime marketing targets to aim for each year.

A rather uniform schedule is also common for payment of monthly wages. As a result, on or near the 25th of each month, restaurants, stores and even taxi cabs notice a predictable rise in business for a couple of days.

Combining both bonuses and monthly salary, the income of wage-earner households in Japan grew to $4,452 in 1992with disposable income rising to $3,741.

So just how is the average worker's income allocated? Roughly 14 percent of disposable income is saved and, along with bonus money, this income is often designated for major housing expenses, retirement, purchases of durables, children's education and weddings.

The largest category of household expenditures is food, accounting for $659 (17%) per month in 1992. Clothing and footwear purchases account for nearly 6 percent of monthly disposable income, with housing and utilities at closer to 3 percent. Reading and recreation account for a relatively large 7.5 percent share, with average monthly expenditures of $271.

HUSBANDS SURRENDER THEIR SALARIES TO WIVES

The traditional custom of the Japanese man "surrendering" his salary to his wife in exchange for an "allowance" is still commonly practiced. As a result, the average housewife is a person with a great deal of purchasing power, often determining on her own where the family's money will be spent. Men may have little to say about purchases of basic necessities such as clothing, household goods and groceries, domestic appliances, toiletries and pharmaceuticals, and gifts and toys. The significance of this is clearly illustrated by the fact that roughly 90 percent of Japan's department store customers are said to be women and their children, clearly indicating the target market for promotion and advertising. Men in Japan tend to become involved only when making purchases of cars, stereos and televisions, and sports and leisure goods.

Shopping for food and household goods in Japan is, very often, a daily event for the woman of the house. Usually by bicycle or on foot, her shopping trip may include many stops at various small shops, the vegetable stand, *tofu* shop, or even the *senbei* cracker shop.

Typically concentrated in narrow, crowded streets near the local train station, these shops combine to form what is commonly called a *shoten gai*--a frequented shopping district within each neighborhood. The roots of these single product line "mom and pop" stores are old and deep, with many stores having built generations of goodwill, service and loyalty. And while the small, specialized and individually owned stores form a very unique element of Japan's marketplace, it is precisely this segment of the retail market that is the most difficult for the newcomer to penetrate.

Japan has 663 cities and 2,573 towns, and within each of these there are numerous small retail shops. As a result, Japan's retailers surpass 2.1 million-- a figure comparable to that in

the U.S. And, including both retail and nonretail forms in nonprimary industries, small and medium firms account for over 90 percent of all of Japan's businesses, clearly indicating that the small and specialized retailer found in each village and town is indicative of the majority of Japan's business.

But while these small retailers are a firmly established element of marketing in Japan, a more recent development has been the introduction of supermarkets, "superstores" and convenience stores. While supermarkets are a familiar form of food retailing in many Western countries, Japan's concept of the "superstore" is one which is rather unique. These mass-merchandisers handle a wide range of discounted products, including anything from food and furniture to clothing and bicycles.

Along with supermarkets, the so-called "superstores" are also able to take advantage of economies of scale in procurement, allowing the customer not only the convenience of shopping for everything under one roof, but also highly competitive prices.

In addition to the small, specialized retailer, supermarket and "superstore," a more traditional yet, until recently, rather unexplored means of merchandising in Japan is "door-to-door" sales. While this convenient method of purchasing began with the local "medicine man" traveling from house to house, modern times have seen the method applied to such products as cleaning and other supplies, cosmetics, encyclopedias and English language study tapes.

Mail-order sales are another means of "no store sales." With the increasing move toward consumer convenience--and with the growing number of working women-- it is likely that both mail order and door-to-door sales will have a promising future.

Recent introduction of the "convenience store" has also come in response to changing consumer lifestyles, with 7-Eleven taking the pioneering lead as a forerunner in this field. The chain of small neighborhood supermarkets, modeled after those in the U.S., are open from early morning to late evening. Despite the numerous competitors springing up as a result of 7-Eleven's success, over 2,000 convenience stores nationwide nonetheless netted $780 million in 1984.

It is clear that the consumer in Japan has almost limitless options when it comes to where to purchase almost any kind of product. As a result, the marketplace for both consumer and capital goods is clearly a buyers' market, and perhaps more than anywhere else in the world, in Japan the consumer is king.

From *Japan Report 32* (January 2, 1986) New York: Consulate General of Japan.

HEADED FOR TROUBLE?
RESTRUCTURING AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN JAPAN

"The irony of Japan's unemployment statistics is that they reveal there has been no fundamental change in the way Japanese companies go about their hiring," says Keio University professor of economics Haruo Shimada. "Companies have traditionally adjusted their payrolls by cutting down on the number of new employees they hire rather than by laying off those already in their employ. As long as the Japanese economy was registering 3% growth, Japanese companies hired commensurate numbers of new employees: however, in the past three or four years the Japanese economy has been registering zero and even negative (1993) rates of growth, meaning companies cut back drastically on their hiring.

"The strain of economic hardship is always borne by newcomers to the job market. Those students entering the job market in April are at the back end of the second wave of baby boomers born in the 1970s. When Japan recovers from this latest slump, expect managers to start shouting about a shortage of workers. From next year the number of graduates entering the job market will decrease -- and the decrease will continue for at least 20 years."

Hiring practices may not have changed fundamentally, but other transformations are taking place in the employment structure. Corporate restructuring in this latest ["Heisei Depression"] slump has been so thorough that most companies now have little or any room left for rationalization in their blue collar departments. The next targets of rationalization are middle-aged, white-collar employees. According to the Institute of Labor Administration's annual survey of 251 companies whose stock is listed on the Tokyo Stock Exchange, almost 60% (140 companies) have introduced the Preferential System for Earlier Retirement--up from around 20% in 1980. Forty-six companies (33%) offer preferential treatment to employees aged below 50, and eight companies (6%) to employees below 40. Is the so-called lifetime employment system--that pillar of the Japanese management system caving in'?

Professor Shimada attacks the very question: "There never has been "lifetime employment" in Japan," he says. "There is nothing in any employee's contract that guarantees a job for life, neither is there any historical reason to believe that Japanese management has ever practiced a system of lifetime employment for its employees. Long-term employment was unusual before World War II, and for years afterward many companies continued to fire at will. Large scale adjustments of the workforce were carried out in the early 1970s, too."

Lifetime employment, Shimada argues is wrongly interpreted as the earned product of many years economic growth rather than as a transitory reflection of the need for labor to sustain growth. "Japan enjoyed high economic growth rates of around 10% [net] for a good 20 years before the 1980s, and in that period companies could not even consider adjusting their levels of employment. The companies committed themselves to recruiting new employees and securing a workforce.

However, the Japanese employment system cannot remain unchanged forever. Important changes have taken place: the Japanese economy has undergone a longterm shift towards maturity after a period of high growth; the global economy has changed structurally, with global price destruction having eroded the basis of Japan's export-oriented companies; the Japanese population and workforce is aging rapidly, and improvements in information and communications technologies are having far-reaching consequences .

"Japanese companies have gone about business presuming ever-continuing high economic growth, but now that the economy has matured they have to reconsider everything, from product development and capital procurement, to employment, salaries, and the very organization of the enterprise itself," Shimada says. "In carrying out such restructuring, various mismatchings will arise--the loss of business opportunities, and increased unemployment, for two--and though these may be inevitable, naturally it will be desirable to keep them to a minimum. Deregulation is central to the creation of the new industries and job opportunities that can do that."

ANOTHER CROSSROADS

The Japanese media is apt to use the phrase "We are at a historical turning point" in times of recession and climbing unemployment Does the phrase apply to the Heisei Depression? Is Japan really at a crossroads?

"Not if management is careful," says Yukinori Wakabayashi, president of the Labor Welfare Corporation and former vice-minister of the Ministry of Labor. He points to four concurrently occurring processes that if mismanaged could leave Japan facing a high-unemployment crisis.

The first, he says, is the conversion of the industrial structure because of the high yen; the second is that Japan is an aged (and aging society, in which middle-aged and senior white-collar workers have become the target of employment adjustment; the third is the decrease in the number of younger workers, which is making it more difficult to repattern the country's industrial makeup; and the fourth is the increasing diversification of unemployment due to an increase in part-time and temporary workers.

Many commentators argue that while the unemployment rate is quoted at an all-time high. it would be higher still if the dead-weight or "extra" workforce were factored in.

"I don't think it's fair to say that companies really have an 'extra' workforce," says Wakabayashi. "Company presidents know from the scars of previous employment adjustments that they must--and surely are--using their workforce to its full extent. They have done this by adjusting working hours, for example, and the govemment backs them up by legislating new labor policy measures."

Approximately 866,000 students will graduate from universities and junior colleges in the coming spring. According to an October survey by Mainichi Communications, the number of

students who will graduate in the spring of 1996 and who had been provisionally approved admittance by companies by the end of August 31 was 65%, about 4% down on last year for male liberal arts students and about 5.5% lower (56%) for female liberal arts students. For male science students the figure was 63% (5% down on last year) and for female science students 59% (8% down). Wakabayashi argues that the problems new graduates are facing in finding work are coming to a head and that the number of unemployed youngsters will decline in tune with economic recovery. "There will not be the structural unemployment in Japan among younger workers that there is in European countries," he says.

PREVENTING HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT

What policy measures should be taken to prevent Japan from entering a high unemployment era? "First of all, the govemment should implement a macro economic policy that engenders economic growth of at least 3%," says Wakabayashi. "And in public investment, the introduction of flexible policy measures enabling the issuance of construction bonds, not just in the traditional fields of civil engineering but in information and telecommunications, education, and social welfare. Unemployment among middle-aged white-collar workers cannot be eased solely by (even assuming) an expansion of investment in traditional civil engineerging."

Wakabayashi argues that much more investment should be made in the development of human resources, the core of high-value-added industries. The long-term employment system must be maintained because it is valued by employers and employees alike, he says, but he also urges that specific measures enabling smoother mobility of workers among companies and businesses is important to maintaining and improving their potential. Wakabayashi expects public employment-security offices (there are 478 offices and 115 branch offices throughout Japan) to play an increasingly important role in enabling the mobility of people between companies without causing unemployment.

Some argue that more private employment agencies should be allowed to operate in this area (a limit is currently set for 16 business categories). Wakabayashi disagrees, arguing that the numbers of workers placed in full-time employment by such agencies is limited even in the US and Europe, where they are wide-spread, and that such businesses will not increase the mobility of the labor market. "Private employment agencies are inclined to be efficiency oriented," he says, "and do not necessanly introduce the appropriate jobs to job seekers.

"The seniority system, in which employees' salaries are increased incrementally according to length of service, must be reviewed to recognize merit. Such a system must be examined for the benefit of the growing number of seniors in the job market, too. The current system does not reflect an employee's individual contribution to the company. The quick answer is to throw senior workers back out into the labor market, but that is the wrong answer: it can only lead to long-term high unemployment. Labor has to understand that it will have to share some of the burden in the restructuring of the wage system. Labor and management will have to cooperate.

The incre"ased participation of women in the work place is naturally a prerequisite for the balanced development of Japanese society. There are a number of regulations that could be lifted to effect this. Again, a labor-management package deal will need to be arranged. These are difficult times; we will just have to grit our teeth and strive together to secure stable employment and employment opportunities for middle-aged and senior workers."

Source *Look Japan*, December 1995.

TOPIC 6

THE JAPANESE STANDARD OF LIVING

Lesson

How does the Japanese standard of living compare with that of the United States and other nations, and how is the quest for the good life changing?

LESSON OBJECTIVES

The student will 1) identify indicators of standard of living; 2) read and interpret tables and graphs depicting data about Japanese standard of living and quality of life; 3) generalize about the Japanese standard of living and quality of life, and 4) compare aspects of life in Japan, the United States and selected other nations.

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- ❑ Handout 6.1 "Standard of Living Indicators "
- ❑ Handout 6.2 "The Japanese Diet"
- ❑ Handout 6.3 "Sports and Leisure"
- ❑ Handout 6.4 "Travel"
- ❑ Handout 6.5 "Important Aspects of Daily Life: A Comparison"
- ❑ Handout 6.6 "A Night at the Pachinko Parlor"
- ❑ Map of Japan

STRATEGIES

One result of the Japanese "economic miracle" has been a substantial improvement in the average Japanese's standard of living as measured by typical indicators of per capita income, diet, health, and material possessions. Proportionally fewer Japanese are unemployed than are Americans. There are fewer extremes of wealth and poverty in Japan than in the United States. As their physical and material lives improve, however, the Japanese continue their search for the "good life." The "good life," although it includes a materialistic dimension, is not limited to concerns with the basic necessities of life or even modern conveniences and consumer goods. The quality of life also encompasses elements of intellectual, physical and spiritual well-being, elements the Japanese have traditionally sought to incorporate in their lives.

Initiate a discussion on standard of living, and indicators of standard of living. Have students generate a list of indicators. Have students group specific items under such categories as "Necessities" and "Conveniences. " Ask students to estimate the Japanese standard of living using these criteria.

Handout 6.1, "Standard of Living Indicators" may be used in a variety of ways. You may: (a) Guide students in reading and interpreting each table and then comparing this information to their initial speculations about the Japanese standard of living, or (b) have students generate their own questions about the tables. These may be used for general class discussion or a student may swap two or three questions with another student and answer those questions.

You may wish to distribute copies of Handout 6.1 and ask the following questions to generate discussion.

- What do these data tell about the Japanese standard of living?
- What other data do we need before drawing conclusions?

Other comments and questions to guide student analysis of the tables:

Table 1

Ask students to label the categories on the chart as to whether they are "Necessities" or "Conveniences" as previously discussed. How does Japan compare to the U.S. and Western Europe in standard of living? Why are medical care costs so low in England and West Germany?

Table 2

Do Japanese people save more than people in the U.S. and Western Europe? Are people in Japan saving more or less than they did several years ago? Are people in the U.S. saving more or less?

Table 3

What are *tatami* mats? (woven straw floor mats, 1.8 x .9 meters--they are used as a unit of measurement for homes and apartments). Note that space is in square meters. Locate Tokyo/Yokohama and the Tohoku area on a map. Why are these two areas contrasted? Ask students to comment on the gap between running water and sewerage ratios. Is this comparable to the U.S.? Are suburban or rural homes in the U.S. larger than city dwellings?

Table 4

How do students think these percentages compare with ownership percentages of these goods in their communities. Which consumer products do we find in greater frequency in individual Japanese households. Any surprises?

Distribute copies of Handout 6.2, "The Japanese Diet." Ask students "How does the Japanese diet compare to other highly industrialized nations? ...to economically developing nations such as China or India?"

Summarize findings and assessments of the Japanese standard of living to this point. Remind students of their initial list of factors and ask what has not been dealt with thus far.

Handout 6.3, "Sports and Leisure" presents data about favorite sports and leisure pursuits.

- What are the most popular leisure activities? Sports?
- How do you think this compares to the U.S.?
- What do these tables tell us about the quality of life in Japan?

The Japanese are traveling more, and more and more people are visiting Japan every year. Handout 6.4 shows the percentages of people travelling to and from Japan for 1989 - 1993.

- What destinations are becoming more popular and which ones are decreasing in popularity? Why do you think this is so?
- Who visits Japan? Is it becoming more or less popular as a travel destination?

Have students offer generalizations about the Japanese standard of living based on the set of tables they have studied. Then ask:

- Do you think the Japanese are satisfied with their lives?
- What aspects of life do you think the Japanese consider most important? The least important?

Distribute copies of Handout 6.5, "Important Aspects of Daily Life: A Comparison," and have students compare their speculations with the data presented. Ask:

- What was viewed as most important in the 1970s?
- What was viewed as most important in the 1980s and 1990s? In approximately what year did the shift in attitude occur?
- Can you think of any reasons for changes in what the Japanese view as the most important aspects of daily life?
- Do you think there have been similar changes in the United States? What evidence can you give to support your opinion?

Distribute copies of Handout 6.6, "A Night at the Pachinko Parlor." Point out to students that the person interviewed holds "widely reported and controversial opinions." Ask

- Which of Hiroshi Takeuchi's ideas are supported by information you have read and heard about Japan?
- Which of his ideas are new to you?
- Why does Hiroshi Takeuchi call Japan "an extremely religious nation?"
- What are his views on multimedia and medical facilities for care of the aged?
- Why do you think the article is entitled "A Night at the Pachinko Parlor"?

STANDARD OF LIVING INDICATORS

TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURES BY COUNTRY, 1992 (in%)

	Food	Clothing	Rent and Utilities	Furniture & Appliances	Medical Care	Travel and Communications	Education and Entertainment
France	18.9	6.2	20.4	7.8	10	16.4	7.7
Japan	19.9	6.1	19.9	6	10.9	9.7	10.2
U.K.	20.9	5.6	16.1	9.1	1.5	16.8	9.8
U.S.A.	11.6	6	13.2	6.1	17	12.6	10.1
Germany	19.9	7.6	20.5	9	5.2	17.3	10.2

From *Facts and Figures of Japan* (Tokyo: Foreign Press Center, Japan, 1995 p. 69

TABLE 2: COMPARISON OF HOUSEHOLD SAVINGS RATE BY COUNTRY (in %)

	Japan	Germany	France	U.K.	U.S.A.
1983	16.1	10.9	11.6	5.7	7
1990	14.1	13.9	7.2	4.2	4.3
1992	14.4	12.8	7.9	8.8	4.1

From *Facts and Figures of Japan* (Tokyo: Foreign Press Center, Japan, 1995p. 69

TABLE 3: HOUSING CONDITIONS IN JAPAN

	All Japan	Tokyo, Yokohama	Tohoku*
No. of rooms per dweiling	4.74	3.91	5.53
No.of *tatami* per dwelling	28.63	23.34	36.64
Floor space per dwelling (m2)	86.16	67.28	114.09
Land area per dwelling (m2)	258	208	--
Running water ratio (%)	93.7	96.5	--
Sewerage ratio (%)	57.9	79.9	--
Bathing facilities ratio (%)	88.1	83.7	--
Ownership ratio (%)	62.3	53.1	73.25
Monthly rent per *tatami (Y)*	1,625	2,447	

**Tohoku: 6 prefectures of northern Honshu*
From *Japan 1988:An International Comparison* (Tokyo: Keizai Koho Center, 1988), p. 87.

TABLE 4: OWNERSHIP OF CONSUMER DURABLES BY JAPANESE HOUSEHOLDS (1993)

Color TV Sets	99.1
Refrigerators	93.0
Washing Machines	99.2
Vacuum cleaners	98.4
Cameras	87.3
Passenger cars	80.0
Stereos	61.3
Room Air Conditioners	72.3
Microwave Ovens	81.3
Videocassette Recorders	75.1
Facsimilies	6.7
Pushbutton Phones	53.2
Personal Computers	11.9
CD Players	54.3

From Japan 1995:An International Companson (Tokyo: Keizai Koho Center, 1995), p. 83.

THE JAPANESE DIET

PER CAPITAL DAILY SUPPLY OF NUTRIENTS BY COUNTRY

	Germany (1988)	France (1988)	United States (1988)	Japan (1992)	United Kingdom (1987)	Italy (1988)
Calories (kcal)	3,537	3,491	3,495	2,626	3,264	3,602
Carbohydrates	55	55	64	80	63	70
Meat	45	45	36	20	37	30
Protein	102	122	108	89	95	109
Animal Protein	67	69	69	52	62	55
Fats	189	179	176	84	155	178

From *Facts and Figures of Japan* (Tokyo: Foreign Press Center, Japan, 1995), p. 71.

PER CAPITA ANNUAL FOOD SUPPLY BY COUNTRY (kg)

	Germany (1988)	France (1988)	United States (1988)	Japan (1992)	United Kingdom (1988)	Italy (1988)
Cereals	78	84	76	103	86	120
Vegetables	88	123	92	125	65	167
Meat	104	109	120	41	77	86
Fish and Shellfish	8	22	8	66	12	13
Dairy Products	293	368	254	84	282	251

From *Facts and Figures of Japan* (Tokyo: Foreign Press Center, Japan, 1995), p. 71.

SPORTS AND LEISURE

FAVORITE SPORTS, 1993

	PERSONS INVOLVED		
	Number (Million)	*% Share of Population Over 14*	*Average Frequency Per Year*
Gymnastics	32.9	37.8	59
Bowling	40.2	27.7	6
Jogging	26.9	27.2	36
Swimming	23.6	26.3	12
Baseball, catch	21.8	20.9	16.3
Fishing	19.7	18.9	12.2
Golf Practice	19.4	18.6	16.3
Skiing	17.7	17.0	6.5

From *Facts and Figures of Japan* (Tokyo: Foreign Press Center, Japan, 1995, p. 105.

FAVORITE LEISURE PURSUITS 1993

	PERSONS INVOLVED		
	Number (Million)	*% Share of Population Over 14*	*Average Frequency Per Year*
Gardening	34.6	33.2	37.5
Movies	31.3	30.1	4.9
Listening to music	43.4	41.7	68.4
Handicrafts	18.1	17.4	26.1
Sporting events	21.5	20.7	6.1
Concerts	22.9	22.0	4.4
Watching Videos	46.1	44.3	21.0
Art appreciation	17.3	16.6	5.6

From Facts and Figures of Japan (Tokyo: Foreign Press Center, Japan, 1995), p. 105.

TRAVEL

DESTINATIONS OF JAPANESE GOING ABROAD (1,000 persons)

	1991	1992	1993
U.S.A.	3,026	3,152	3,067
S. Korea	1,178	1,140	1,234
Hong Kong	819	813	738
Australia	440	545	594
Singapore	491	582	552
Taiwan	615	579	489
China	313	398	441
Thailand	286	304	313
United Kingdom	167	236	256
France	190	230	249
Indonesia	156	203	241
Canada	159	182	197
Philippines	161	172	186
Italy	89	140	176
Germany	95	116	128
New Zealand	80	95	103
Others	436	955	990
TOTAL	8,701	9,842	9,954

From *Facts and Figures of Japan* (Tokyo: Foreign Press Center, Japan, 1995), p. 106.

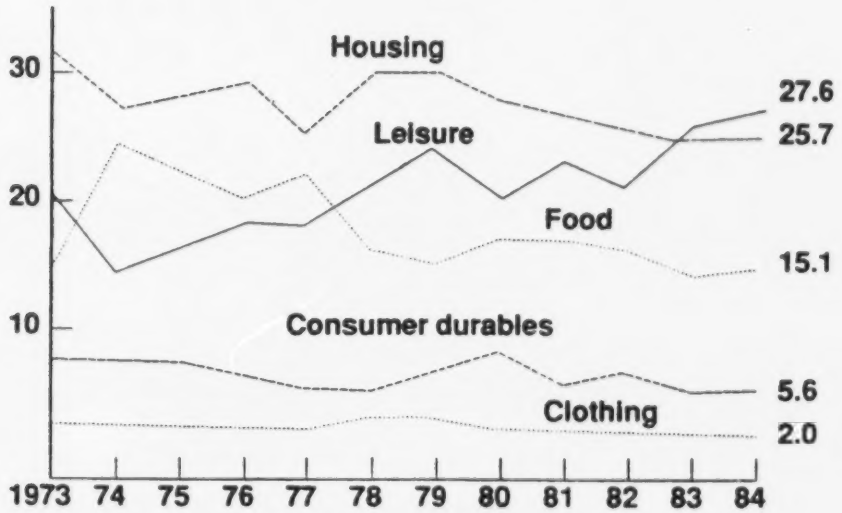
FOREIGNERS VISITING JAPAN BY NATIONALITY (1,000 persons)

	1991	1992	1993
Taiwan	551	608	567
S. Korea	426	425	397
USA	234	239	214
U.K.	114	135	120
Canada	32	38	40
Thailand	64	53	31
Brazil	58	32	25
Hong Kong	26	28	23
Australia	20	22	23
Germany	19	23	21
Malaysia	47	32	20
Singapore	24	22	20
France	17	17	18
Russia	15	12	15
Indonesia	16	14	13
China	10	12	11
Others	172	129	110

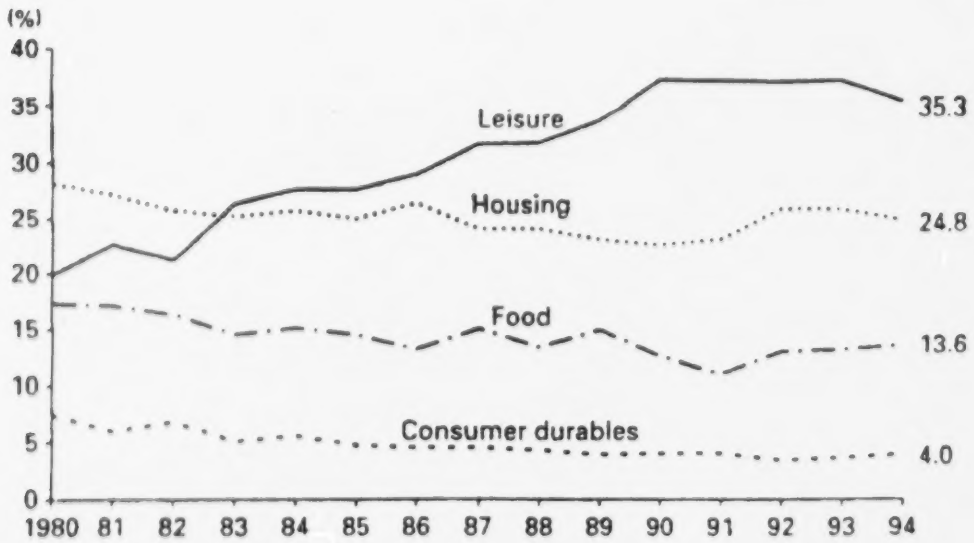
From Facts and Figures of Japan (Tokyo: Foreign Press Center, Japan, 1995), p. 106.

IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF DAILY LIFE: A COMPARISON

What aspect of daily life is most important to you?



From *Facts and Figures of Japan* (Tokyo: Foreign Press Center, 1995), p. 104.



From *Facts and Figures of Japan* (Tokyo: Foreign Press Center, 1995), p. 104.

A NIGHT AT THE PACHINKO PARLOR

Hiroshi Takeuchi, director of the General Research Institute at the Long-Term Credit Bank of Japan, argues that Japanese are rejecting the community as a bothersome construct, but that the activities symptomatic of this social fracturing actually support the economy to some extent. Look Japan spoke to him abcut his widely-reported and controversial opinions.

Some analysts are saying that the Japanese economy is recovering. What do you think?
HIROSHI TAKEUCHI: Japan's economic growth rate is hovering at just over 1%. China's is at 12%.; ASEAN countries at 8% to 9%; Asian NIEs, 7-8%; the US, 4% or better; and Germany, 4%. Japan is in a period of unstable, low growth. One of the reasons for this is the influence of overambitious plant and equipment investment in the days of the bubble economy; these investments have now flattened out. Another reason is that general merchandising and textile manufacturers have followed automakers in moving production overseas, drastically reducing the nation's exports. Home electronics manufacturers too have defected, so television exports are down. Naturally, domestic production has decreased. And since most future Japanese investment will be made abroad, the prospects for economic revitalization are dim.

Will this lead to hollowing out of the economy?
HT: I don't know ifI would call it 'hollowing out.' Most of the present shift overseas is in middle or lower-grade goods, so the rising imports comprise mostly these types of items. As Japanese companies set up shop in foreign countries, their key production equipment and components are going to come from Japan. In short, imports of lower-grade goods will increase, but exports of high-tech manufactured goods will also rise, so Japanese manufacturing will evolve into a highly developed structure. This situation cannot really be called hollowing out. The US foreign production rate is 27%, but Japan's is only 6%. The US is clearly hollowed out, so why is it such a hot topic in Japan but not in the US? Because the yen is too strong and Japanese companies are moving overseas at such an alarming rate.

What prompted the yen to grow so strong?
HT: There are strict regulations, many vested interests, too little investment, and substantial amounts of savings in Japan. These social habits and systems that govern the economy are too old to support the present economic power of Japan. Another reason is that under the Cold War structure Japan did not possess military might so her role was to build a more stable society as a barrier against communist ideology. One way to do that was to eliminate competition. *Dango* (a practice of prearranged bidding) appeared, and manufacturers began to set retail prices for all dealers, giving rise to a "go-along-with-the-crowd" mentality. Because there is no competition, Japanese people eat rice that is eight times more expensive and sugar that is 12 times more expensive than the same items overseas. Unfortunately there is nothing we can do about that now, because of the high wage structure. Now that the Cold War is over, discount stores are

cropping up and we are seeing an overall lowering of prices. But the nation is still in a state of confusion.

What problems do you foresee in the future?
HT: The total labor population decreased this year. Or to put it another way, the number of workers under the age of 60 fell. By the year 2020, both trade and capital liberalization will develop throughout Asia. When they do, Japan's population will total about 32 million with one quater of that being persons aged 65 or older, and the size of the younger supporting generation will drop. Pensions, social insurance costs, and medical expenses will make up about 23% of GNP, with the burden on workers reaching some 50%. The projected birthrate in Tokyo will be about 1.1 in 2020, so the number of married couples where both individuals were single children will increase. When these couples turn 50, they will have four older realatives to care for but only one child, so the three will have to constantly attend to the four. No one will be able to work in such a world.

Then there's nothing to do but pray that when the 50% burdens appear, the arrangements for the total welfare policy are complete. With the continuing decline in the birthrate, the natural decrease in the population of 18-year-olds and the changes in both industrial structure and labor force, many new businesses are coming on the scene, but they have not generated new employment. Even so telecommunications, *karaoke*, and *pachinko* [a form of pinball gambling in which participants illicitly exchange "prizes" for money at "secret" booths near the parlor] and publicly managed gambling have shown favorable growth.
HT: Bicycle-, horse-, and boat racing are all run by the government, but in Japan, private gambling is illegal. These events draw crowds because the population enjoys a little gambling on a personal level in mahjong or golf. The community is gradually disappearing; in Tokyo, people no longer recognize their neighbors and are living in a disjointed, disconnected world. Entertainment is now more individualized, which has energized the pachinko industry. This is one type of social fracturing.

The government should legalize gambling on professional sports and vote in the introduction of soccer pools (betting on the results of fixtures) because right now there are few leisure activities. That's why pachinko is at its most vital outside of the major cities. Many pachinko enthusiasts spend about ¥10,000 ($120) each time they play, while the greatest number of people in Las Vegas gamble at the 25 cent slot machines. I think this shows that Japan is a great gambling nation.

Does this have much effect on the economy?
HT: Well no, but sales in the pachinko industry are presently ¥18 trillion ($216 billion). GNP is some ¥500 trillion ($656 trillion) and consumer spending ¥250 trillion ($3 trillion) meaning that about 7% of all consumer spending is attributable to pachinko. It is already a huge industry, so while gambling is illegal in Japan, it is still a national pastime. Similarly, it is often said that the

Japanese are a non-religious people, but the number of 'followers' is 220 million, making Japan an extremely religious nation.

Two hundred million? But Japan's population is only 120 million.
HT: That's because everyone supports a shrine *and* a temple. They participate in festivals honoring the family deity and shrine, and in Buddhist funerals. Friends, relatives, and bosses alike bring money to funerals. They also make donations to the festivals. Then there is *hatsumode* (the first visit of the New Year to a shrine). These religious expenses represent 3% to 4% of personal spending. Japan really is a devout nation.

Whether it is custom or personal belief, the money is spent within the framework of religion.
HT: Yes, everyone makes these expenditures voluntarily. They spend the money because to do so has a religious significance.

Every nation in the world has a community built around a common religion and Japan is no exception. All of the family gather together for the memorial service after a funeral. Coincidentally, because Japanese houses are very small, gatherings can't be held on an everyday basis, so karaoke thrives. On Sundays, the whole family, from the grandparents on down to the grandchildren, pack up and head for the karaoke houses. Those living on pension benefits frequent pachinko parlors...These activities are the Japanese form of leisure.

I thought the top leisure activity in Japan was dining out.
HT: Women have started working outside the home and are marrying at a later age. The number of single people in Japan has increased drastically, and traditional society has begun to crumble. As these trends progress, people eat out more often. All of these factors signal a breakup of the community and the family structure in Japan. What is even more telling is the shift from eating in restaurants to buying food from convenience stores. Individuals go to these stores to buy their groceries and then eat their meals alone while playing computer games or watching videos. It's a morbid habit!

These are all negative factors. Do you see anything positive happening in the future?
HT: What is there to see? Many are banking on multimedia to have a positive effect on the economy and society, but the Japanese business environment can be compared to an old-fashioned, big meeting room; if you're quiet and you watch and listen, you can see who is doing what where. It is the Asian way. No matter what else changes, that stays the same. Medical facilities for the care of the aged have the highest possibilities as well as the highest need for multimedia. We are entering an era of unprecedented numbers of elderly. With so many older people needing care at all of the hospitals, it's going to be hard on the doctors too and the health care system will be in danger of crumbling. The situation will present a number of opportunities for utilization of multimedia. For example, equipment can be installed in all

retirement home rooms and used to examine and treat patients. Treatment results can be collected automatically to help manage patient health care.

Recently, I've seen a positive sign among the Japanese people. The Great Hanshin Earthquake caused enormous damage, but the people rallied together and helped each other. Many more young people than expected volunteered; a community went to work. Everyone believed that by banding together, they could make everything all right. The significance of the these acts leaves me very optimistic. After the Kobe Earthquake, department store sales in Tokyo fell 10% and the number of skiers dropped 15%. I think it is wonderful that people refrained from purchasing expensive goods and from going skiing out of respect for those who were less fortunate; it gave me the feeling that a sense of community is alive and well. I saw it as a very positive development.

Although people are currently rejecting the old traditions and community relations I thought it was common sense that motivated them to go out and help people in a time of disaster. In doing so they found something good within themselves.
HT: That's right.